COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 91
May 2002

The Legacy of Johnny Craig

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The Legacy of Johnny Craig

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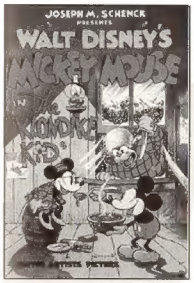

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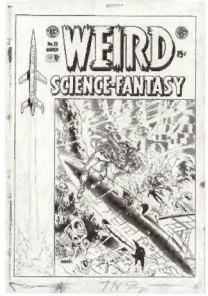

Amazing Spider-Man #83 (Oakland copy), CGC 9.8 – Sold for **$1,782.50** (35 times Guide!)

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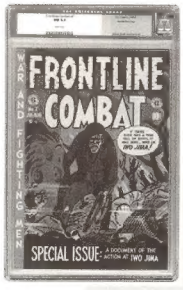

Vault of Horror #12 (Gaines File), CGC 9.8 – Sold for **$29,900** (over 6 times Guide!)

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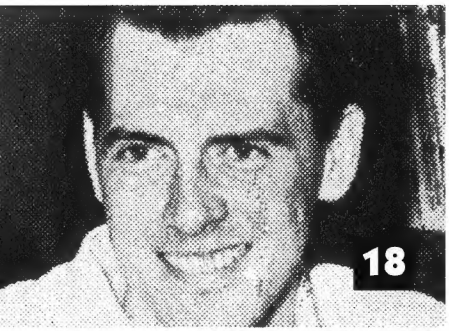

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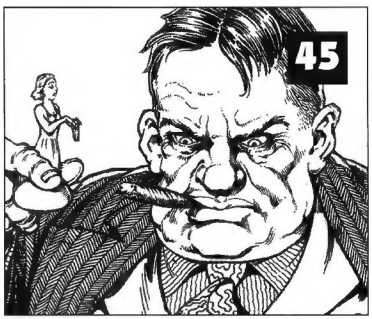

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Cover A - Vault of Horror #28 (Dec 1952/Jan 1953) by Johnny Craig © 2002 William M. Gaines Agent, Inc. Cover B - Vault of Horror #32 (Aug/Sep 1953) by Johnny Craig © 2002 William M. Gaines Agent, Inc.

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Johnny Craig

Craig by fellow EC staffer Marie Severin.

Johnny Craig was one of the EC artists that I never had a chance to meet in person. He did not attend conventions, and, living in Pennsylvania, our paths never crossed at Bill Gaines' offices in New York during the years I spent a lot of time visiting. I knew Johnny only through his artwork and an occasional letter, but I know this much: he was a real gentleman. His self-effacing remarks always told you that while he was proud of his work and he worked very hard at it, he did not possess the overgrown ego that often comes with being an artist.

All through the years from the early 1970s until just recently, Johnny regularly got a check from Bill Gaines (or his estate). Bill owned the rights to the EC stories and art himself, and he owned the actual artwork himself; he didn't have to share any of the royalties he got for my reprints of the EC comics in various formats, and when I helped Bill sell off all of the EC original art, Bill could have kept all that money for himself...but he didn't. Bill had worked out a formula whereby every EC artist got a certain percentage of every dollar that came in from royalties and from art sales. Even when the artist was deceased, as in the case of Wally Wood, Bill would send a check to his family. Bill was truly a generous man, and I am proud to have known him.

About a year ago I got a package in the mail from Johnny Craig. Not expecting anything, I wondered, "What might this be?" It was a small painting, of the Vault-Keeper and Drusilla, signed, Johnny Craig. And a note: "Dear Russ, I am sending you this as a small token of my appreciation for all you have done for preserving the EC legend." Wow! Johnny was the only EC artist to do that for me...which says a lot about what kind of man he was.

A few issues back, a *CBM* reader wrote me that he would like to see an article on the comics of Harry A Chesler. I took a quick look into the index of past issues of *CBM* and it seemed that nothing at all had been done on Chesler's line of comic books, with their blood-dripping, grotesque covers. So I called Jon Berk and he immediately volunteered to write the article you see in this issue. About the same time I was contacted by Michael Kronenberg, a *CBM* reader who is also the art director for *Monsters from the Vault* magazine, a monster magazine similar to *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. Michael volunteered to do the graphic design for an article in *CBM*...anything I wanted to toss him...so I tossed him Jon's article on the Chesler comics, and you see the result in this issue. I think he did a great layout job, what do you think?

And surely you have noticed by now, this issue features 16 full color pages instead of the usual eight pages. This is something we would like to continue, if our readers and advertisers continue their support. As always, I solicit your feedback on any *CBM*-related topic. My e-mail address is in the masthead.

Russ

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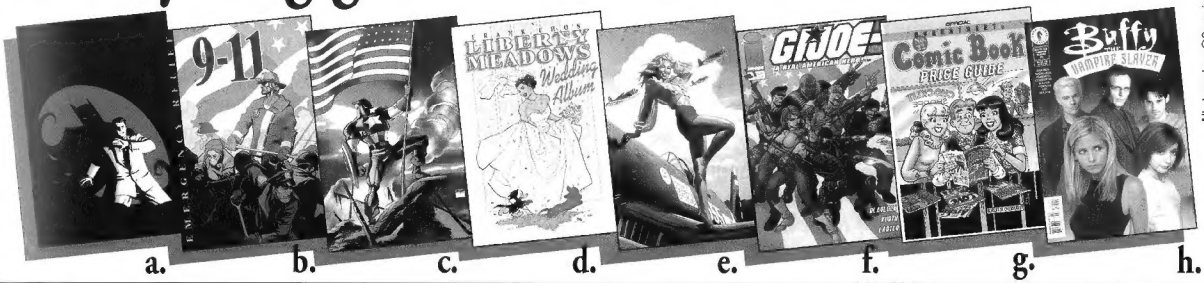

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The facts of life

I've enjoyed reading *CBM* since issue #2 (issue #1 was all ads), and I count on *CBM* as a source of information where open discussion is welcome and appreciated by all.

For nearly 30 years, I have been a collector and dealer, with a lifelong interest in the history of the comic as an art form. I am a *CBM* contributor, Overstreet Advisor, and charter member of CGC, and most recently an editor, creator and instructor. In December 2001, in conjunction with the Housing Authority of Lincoln County, I started the Oceanspray Comics Group and published *Slithiss Attacks!* #1 (issue #2 out in June), written and drawn by kids ages 9-17, in "Adventures In Comic Books" classes I teach at the Oceanspray Family Center in Newport, Oregon. So for those of you who don't know me, I'm basically trying to say that I really care about comics and the people who collect them, create them, grade them, and sell them. It's my favorite subject.

Michael Naiman does market reports for *CBM*, and also discusses whatever he likes to write about in his column, most of which I find interesting, and some of which I agree with—just like it is with every other newspaper and magazine I read. We have a right to express our opinions and agree to disagree, if necessary, so that understanding can emerge from ignorance, and so that people can enjoy an open forum for discussion. I have enjoyed, as have many others in the comics business, some healthy returns from CGC slabbed books that are 9.4 or higher, getting up to two to three times the price for an unslabbed copy, and sometimes higher.

But like Michael Naiman, I'd like CGC to go on record about its grading standards. When Steve Borock brought the CGC "comics to grade" box to the 1999 Overstreet Advisors Meeting, which was held May 21-23 in Baltimore, Bob Overstreet and virtually all of the advisors graded the books, and Steve told me there were a few other dealers he wanted to have grade them, for a total grading community of approximately 70 comics professionals. The results were to be used to help CGC establish an "industry standard" of grading criteria. To this day, the standards I and dozens of other dealers helped establish are considered a trade secret. I don't like it, but hey, until they change it, that's life.

I'm just glad Michael asks hard questions when they need to be asked, because everyone in this hobby owes him for doing that. I believe that CGC actually benefits from Michael's scrutiny for two reasons: The first reason is that free press is good press! People that are on the fence about CGC might actually go ahead and submit books, because Michael explains some aspect which concerns them, all in the process of griping about how they manage to do, or not do, whatever. The second reason

is that CGC is a new company on a learning curve, which has wisely changed new policy directions in mid-stream previously, because of dealer input. A company can save big bucks by avoiding mistakes before money is invested.

Please keep *CBM* an open place for people who care about the hobby to express their opinions.

Jon McClure
via e-mail

A matter of degree

I have enjoyed *Comic Book Marketplace* since its inception. I think you are continuing the tradition of relevant and entertaining information of the comic industry and hobby.

In your first editorial, you mentioned OCD and its relationship to comic collectors. I have thought this since OCD became more commonly known in the 1980s. As we learn more about these disorders, we are able to better handle the situations. I think we all have it to a certain degree. And obviously, the numbering sequence of comic books lends itself to an OCD person almost as second nature. You know, the "gotta have all issues so the numbers line up and match in sequence" syndrome! It is interesting to think about.

Take care and good luck with your endeavors in the marketplace!

Dwayne Wilder
Denison, TX

Purely physical

CBM #89 was another wonderful issue—a unique balance of Golden Age and present day material presented. To those who are unhappy with this mix: *Comic Book Marketplace* is doing exactly what the title implies—dis-

cussing and exploring the vast world of comics. Surely readers can be open to various decades, trends, novelties, genres of all material published that features sequential art. I read all of the articles and enjoy them all. I'm in my mid-forties and have collected from the early 1960s. There are several areas of this hobby in which I don't collect, like original art, statues, golden age books. This doesn't diminish my interest in reading about all of this fascinating material.

I am very pleased with your choice of a thicker, less fragile, cover stock. These are the publishing details that you, Russ, remain committed and concerned about. Over the last 20 years I have limited my collecting to hardcover books only. I'm very pleased by the wealth of material published in this format, including the DC and Marvel Masterpiece reprint editions. I also collect most of the new material published by Graphitti Designs, Fantagraphics, Kitchen Sink, Dark Horse, and several other publishers. I'm attracted by the durability of these books. My books are not "yellowing" or becoming "brittle" with age as most are printed with conservation in mind. I don't worry about damaging old, fragile comics by pulling them from mylar bags. My books are easily accessible and can be displayed in bookshelves—not rows of comic boxes. All of the giants of comic history are represented in my collection, most reproduced in clear and attractive packages.

I sold my complete Marvel collection 20 years ago and have never regretted the decision. One of my motivators for selling my comics was the advent of your fantastic publication of the EC Library in glorious black & white with stitched binding! This collection is probably my most valued and has given me hours of enjoyment.

I have not bought a traditional comic book in those twenty years, though I have often been tempted, because most of the best material seems to have a hard cover release. The production elements of a book have become very important to me (perfect bound/glued in binding will not suffice. Too many experiences of loose pages!) I wonder if I'm alone in my collecting criteria. Of course, your wonderful magazine is a happy and anticipated exception. Thanks for the fine work and keep those "stiff covers" coming.

Jon Lightman
via e-mail

Fostering clarification

Thank you for such incredible coverage of *Hal Foster: Prince of Illustrators—Father of the Adventure Strip*. Once more I'd like to express my appreciation to Meredith Pratt for making such a tasteful design out of my initial layouts, and to J. David Spurlock for mid-wifing the book and keeping the production values at their highest. David took a sizable financial risk in today's volatile market and he should be commended for taking a chance on an unknown writer. To the many people who made the book and article possible, for the support and help of everyone at Vanguard Productions, and to you and your staff at *Comic Book Marketplace* I will be forever indebted.

There are two points in the issue, however, that I'd like to clarify. The first is an explanation to a footnote by Dave Winiewicz found on page #69, which Dave and I had discussed prior to publication. While no one blinks at Hal having assistants on *Prince Valiant* I'm amazed at the fan reaction to the slightest suggestion that he had help on *Tarzan*. The first source is the unedited teleplay to the 1954 episode of *This is Your Life: Hal Foster* found in Syracuse University's Special Collections Library. In the show Joseph H. Neebe, the visionary who started the first *Tarzan* daily strip, said: "I'm proud to have been a means to lead Hal into his chosen field. It was typical of him to split up the pay and drawing of *Tarzan* with his pals to keep their studio going. Later he began drawing the strip full-time by himself." Neebe was at the genesis of the *Tarzan* daily strip and it's unlikely he'd get this fact wrong about the Sunday color page. The second source is a sad news article that was written by *Suncoast News* correspondent Edith Ocasek, and found in one of the Foster scrapbooks. The article, "Helen and Hal Foster will celebrate 67 years of marriage on August 28," is an interview with Helen wherein she recounts her life with Hal, including the Palenske-Young days, and dividing the $75 a week five ways among the artists in the studio. The reason I refer to it as a "sad" article is because it appeared on July 15, 1982—just ten days before Hal's death. Hal never had a chance to celebrate his 90th birthday on August 16th or even his "headlined" anniversary with Helen, his "darling frump."

The second point is that at no time did I ever write in the book that Foster influenced Noel Sickles and Milton Caniff as Bob Harvey suggested. What I did say was that Foster's use of chiaroscuro in the first *Tarzan* daily, something which had never been done in comic strips but was widely prevalent in book illustration, opened editors and publishers up to future artists working in that style. Initially editors were afraid of the "radical" technique but, because Hal's *Tarzan* was so well received by the readers, artists who came after Foster using an impressionistic approach were no longer immediately turned down. Hal "paved the way" for Sickles and Caniff, which is enormously different from having influenced them. But…he's still "The Father of the Adventure Strip" quibble, quibble, wink! All the best,

Brian Kane

Thank you, *Brian, for writing the definitive book on such an important and often neglected comic artist. Meredith Pratt and David Spurlock are to be commended for their support and contributions to the project, but the "Oscar" really goes to you for your research and diligence in getting the book written. It was clearly a labor of love, and your article has drawn more favorable comment from* CBM *readers than any in recent memory. It is no accident that your limited edition sold out so quickly, or that it made Bud Plant's list of bestsellers for 2001, even though it appeared late in the year. And the added dividend of a statue to Foster in Halifax is just the icing on a cake that would never have been baked without you.*

The reason I printed three very early Foster pages in the color section of CBM *#89 (from late 1931, early 1932) was to show readers that, indeed, the backgrounds in some of these panels were not "Fosterish." Along with your proof offered above, there can be no doubt that Foster was using assistants in these early pages. It is hard to tell whether this practice of using assistants was phased out or ended all at once, but a study of the pages from later in 1932 and at the beginning of the Egyptian Sequence in 1933 argues strongly for the lone presence of Foster's hand in these peak period pages. Thanks again for throwing the spotlight on Hal Foster, Prince of Illustrators!*

Russ Cochran

Foster and Frazetta

I enjoyed your Hal Foster issue of *CBM* very much. The only complaint I have is with the Frazetta article by Dr. Dave Winewicz. To illustrate Frazetta's "superiority" over Foster, he presents two examples of Frazetta swipes from Foster and points out how Frazetta "improved" on them.

In the first, he compares a panel Foster did for a daily *Tarzan* strip to a painting Frazetta did for a book cover. Dr. Winiewicz claims the extra muscles in Frazetta's version and the flow of hair and loincloth makes it superior to Foster's.

First of all, I think it unfair and disingenuous to compare a full-fledged painting to a single daily newspaper strip panel. The goal of each is different, the size is different and the content is different. Details that are welcomed in a painting might be distracting and unwanted in a comic panel. Added muscles do not mean a superior drawing or picture. Flowing hair and loincloth are relevant only if movement of the figure or the suggestion of a breeze is to be indicated. And just looking at the two pictures, I think Foster's Tarzan is more realistically drawn. His legs actually appear to be supporting him—bearing his weight. Frazetta's Tarzan's legs seem just shadows, having no other function but decoration. This doesn't mean one version is better than the other, just that each artist was aiming for something different.

The other swipe showed a man moving toward the reader. Dr. Winewicz claimed that the Frazetta's figure is superior because his leg is raised, "giving the impression the man is running instead of walking." Yet, in the Foster version, the text in the panel describes the man as "gliding," not running. And if you check out the *Prince Valiant* page the panel is from (Fantagraphics v.1) it shows that the man is carefully searching for someone—not running. The illusion of speed was not called for here.

I guess what bothered me the most about the comparisons was that even if you think Frazetta improved on the originals, Dr. Winewicz implies that Foster couldn't have. If Foster was doing a painting for a book cover, he could have done a more intricate and imposing Tarzan. What first-rate artist couldn't improve on something he did years before?

Foster had another goal. He was telling the life story of a Viking prince, and he chose to do this on a weekly basis, in the pages of a family newspaper. His drawings were printed on cheap newsprint and he was restricted to a certain degree in what he could write and draw. What he tried to do within those boundaries was different from what Frazetta tried to do with his painting. If you insist on comparing pictures, the only fair way is to compare newspaper Sunday panels. Otherwise it's apples and oranges.

Dr. Winewicz wrote that Frazetta "carried the art of drawing and painting to heights that Foster would never have dreamed possible." We have no way of knowing that. I have difficulty believing an artist as good as Foster couldn't at least "dream" of those heights. The more probable answer is that he wasn't interested in going there. And I don't see why that should reflect badly on either man.

Bob Piombo
Redwood City, CA

It's not surprising, considering his long personal friendship with Mr. Frazetta, that Dr. Winiewicz should state in *CBM* #89 that, "Ultimately, Frazetta thoroughly eclipsed and transcended the work of [Hal] Foster." But he really crossed the line between his usual cheerleading, and just plain bad taste, when he added that, "Frazetta carried the art of drawing and painting to heights that Foster would never have dreamed possible."

Dr. Winiewicz really needs to learn something about art outside his own social circles. To suggest that Frazetta outshone the entire historical pantheon of artists, from Michelangelo to Rembrandt, to such a degree that it would have been impossible for Hal Foster to even imagine a

talent such as Frazetta's, is both obnoxious and insulting—two words that one seems to hear a lot in connection with Frazetta these days.

Represented in your pages were several examples of swipes made by Frank Frazetta from the work of Hal Foster, but despite that fact that for many years Foster and Frazetta worked contemporaneously, I notice that Dr. Winiewicz was unable to produce any swipes that Mr. Foster made of Frazetta's work.

Hal Foster needs no defense. Why does Frank Frazetta?

Jim Keegan
Studio City, CA

Dr. Dave replies

My essay was designed to explain the relation of Frazetta to his early influences (Foster is just ONE of those influences). I also wanted to address those critics that maintain that Frazetta was simply a clone of Foster. Frazetta is the only artist in our field to have legitimately transcended the categories of genre-artist (i.e. fantasy, sci-fi, illustration, etc.) into the world of true creative Art, of Fine Art. My friendship with Frazetta has nothing to do with this judgment. Forty years of study in art history has only served to refine and deepen my informed opinion. I placed Frazetta in the category of "art immortal" long before we met. My intention is not to demean or disparage Foster, but to place Frazetta in that timeless pantheon of the truly creative. I see no other contemporary artist to match his influence or his genius with pen and brush. I have been writing about Frazetta for 25 years and will continue to do so as energetically as I can. As an old professor once told me: "When you come across the truth, bow down and embrace it. Why criticize what is so rare and exquisite!" So far I have received over a hundred emails from people who love my Frazetta commentary.

Dave Winiewicz

Too much Foster spoils the mix

It pains me to write this letter, but after the last several issues I feel forced to do so. For the past decade, the publication of *CBM* has been a monthly pleasure I've looked forward to. Unfortunately, it has become something of a let down to me and the Hal Foster issue only epitomizes this. Don't get me wrong—I wholeheartedly agree with your assessment of Foster's influence on whole generations of comic book artists. However, this magazine has largely forgotten the first two words in its title. Like most readers, I am a "Comic Book" collector. I like newspaper strips, enjoy reading about them, and feel they are entirely relevant—but not to the point where the work of a strip creator should be discussed in 43 out of an issue's 80 pages (I think I got the page count right despite being sleep deprived).

I don't expect there ever will be a consensus regarding *CBM*'s contents, and I think that the only viable solution is to have a mix in each issue: some golden age, some silver, and some bronze (I really don't care about genres or particular artists). Then, every couple of issues should have a smattering of platinum, a touch of newspaper strips, and the occasional (very occasional) column noting relevant recent titles or products. Perhaps I was in the minority, but *CBM* used to be perfectly balanced for my tastes, as well as those of many of the collectors I have consistent contact with.

Finally, in this issues' letter column, another reader dismissed the mag's concern with "the usual facts and dollars." That's the third word in the title—"Marketplace." Many of us enjoy reading about what the marketplace is like in other parts of the country and what other collectors are looking for. Sure, some read this purely out of greed, but the market reports are an important tool for many of us to keep ahead of the collecting curve, pick up books before they become too hot, sell off some titles we no longer want when they command premium prices, etc. Please return this magazine to something resembling its former incarnation. By concentrating solely on those artists considered 20-30 years ago to be the elite of the industry, you're not only going to fail to attract young comic fans, but you also risk alienating the Gold, Silver and Bronze Age COMIC BOOK collectors who undoubtedly comprise the bulk of your readership.

Paul Merolle
New Hampshire

What we're lacking

In the comic book subculture, there are many creators and many collectors. The creators are the ones drawing and writing comic books. The creators are thinking of new storylines or creating new characters and so on. The collectors go out to their favorite comic book store and collect every comic that they enjoy. Perhaps they may collect comic books of their favorite creators. It made me think, are there only two types of people in the world? Creators and collectors? Nope, there are five types of people. There are the creators. There are the destroyers. There are the preservationists. There are the players/audience and finally there are the do-nothings. When I meet someone, I think in my mind...which one are you?

Note: Creators are the ones who create something that someone else will enjoy. Destroyers are the ones who are jealous and destroy something that has been created—terrorists are a fine example of being destroyers. Preservationists or collectors preserve things that have

been created. Some preservationists find enjoyment working in libraries, archives, museums, etc. Players/audience are the ones who enjoy the things that others have created. Good examples of players are people who love playing video games, but have no desire of creating a video game. Do-nothings are simply that, people who create nothing and do nothing, they live a useless existence.

In the comic book subculture we are missing two types of people...the do-nothings and the destroyers. That's why I love the comic book subculture!

Paul Dale Roberts, Publisher
http://www.jazmaonline.com/

What we have

I've always felt that in the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guides* the price is based on grade. So I've always had a tendency to sell a book not at a particular "grade" but at a price. Certain books are worth more than the *Guide* says and even more so in certain areas (this method doesn't work too well online however). It's always been the case that Canadian stores sell at *Guide*, but so do U.S. stores. So within Canada a $10 U.S. back issue is $10 Canadian (and if you've looked at the exchange rate lately, it's anything but). So it's often been quite hard to get some of the bigger books because they migrate south in search of sixty-cents on the dollar riches. So the prices change, and these changes do not necessarily reflect *Guide* (based on good ol' Canadian convention). But it's still expected up here to sell books on par, but it's a seller's market now and I haven't met anyone oblivious to their book's value (no Mile High collection yet), enough to not want on par U.S. dollars for the purchase of their book. So fewer books stay in Canada, and the demand increases and the price increases, and while we may not need to price on par with the *Guide*, all of a sudden we're also facing a shortage; the great migration of everything Silver Age and older is rapidly fleeing the country.

But because of Internet sales and the exchange difference, I find myself saying, "is this VF+? VF-?" less and less and sticking more to "how much can I get for this?" Which is really the fun part about selling comics. I'd have to say 99% of all dealers out there started out as collectors, and they came into this "business" to support their own interests more than profit. But now it's less about those interests and more about that profit. I see dealers holding on to half their comic shipment just to increase demand for any given book. I see dealers selling CGC (SEALED!!!) books for ten times *Guide*. Do these guys still love their comics? Or do they just love the money it brings to them? I don't know if there are still people actually reading comics out there; but we've come into what I feel is a new golden age. More comics are better written right now than they ever have been before. But how often do I get a kid coming into my store and saying "what will be worth more in the future?" and I have to tell them honestly; "Kid, you're better off shopping at the bank."

I think a lot of the people need to wake up and rediscover why they're doing what they now do. In twenty years I hope to still be in this business, but if the people do not read their comics they will not want to come back and buy those back issues or anything new for that matter (after all, the bulk of back issue sales is fueled by nostalgia...or at least it used to be). And I doubt the sound of "that comic was graded way better than my comic" will have the same weight and appeal that "I love the way Stan Lee writes" does. I'm not saying stop making money, but stop trying to control how the money is spent. Don't let that person walk into your store and pay $100 for a comic that came out last week that they can't read. That person won't find the wonder in the stories and art of comic books, they'll just sit on their investment. If people still love comics for what they are (and I say what they are is a medium unlike any other to express and tell stories...and so does Will Eisner and Scott McCloud), then they'd better realize that the investment is not the angle to push, the content is.

Justin Van Leeuwen
Ontario, Canada

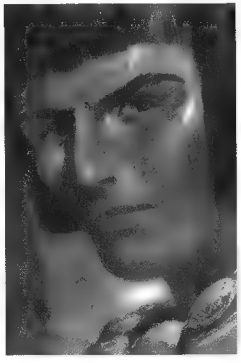
Cover boy

A fistful of very good texts on Carl Barks' life and times [*CBM* 82], now *CBM* owes us a good in-depth look at his genius. I very much liked the interview with Don Spaulding.

Comic history tends to overlook cover artists. Not much [effort is] made to settle who worked on [what]. I only resent that Spaulding was not given full space in the "Cover Gallery."

Now it's time for Morris Gollub and Sam Savitt to come to light. And the great Dell annuals and *Giants* cover artists.

I've [worked] for edition houses, myself. [Here's] a copy of a prince Valiant portrait made for a hardcover, large-sized album, released a few years ago. Oil on canvas.



Marcio Costa
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

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In Praise of 1952

by Pat Calhoun

"The peak experience is climbing the mountain."

This koan captures my feelings about the high point in comics history. I used to think it was 1953, when the fantasy genre perfected the graphic short story, but now my tastes run to 1952, when excitement and innovation made every month more amazing in an ever-expanding comics universe. But 1952 was fifty years ago, and the days when they sold a billion comics a year are long gone. That just makes diving into a few classic books even more enchanting! So—

Shock SuspenStories #1 (Feb-Mar 1952) premiered a sophisticated anthology format composed of a 'Crime SuspenStory,' a 'War SuspenStory,' a 'Science Fiction SuspenStory' and a 'Horror SuspenStory.' The four "root" genres were—of course—the four that EC excelled in.

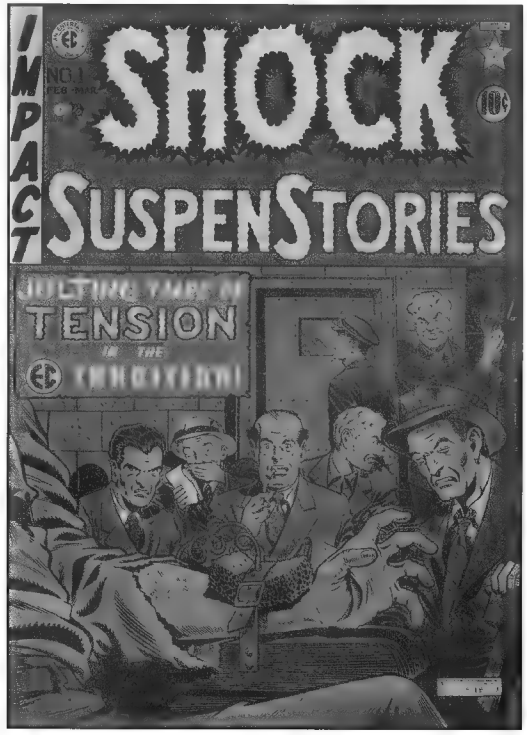
The crime story was a Jack Kamen drawn fable of unholy matrimony, one of many in which a husband murders his wife or vice versa. Here it is the latter. Next Jack Davis art adds pizzazz to a low-key war story wherein a camp commander must preside over his son's execution for cowardice.

Joe Orlando drew the SF offering, "The Monsters." It's one of those "the horrible aliens turn out to be humans" tales—maybe a little too familiar to really shock but an enjoyable read. The horror finale boasts art by 'Ghastly' Graham Ingels. "The Rug" is another paint-by-numbers plot, a hunter becomes the hunted after killing a grizzly bear to make a rug. None of the stories in this issue were spectacular, but none were stinkers. The cool anthology concept and the fine Feldstein electric chair cover wrap the book into a smooth package.

Spellbound #1 (Mar 1952) was the first issue of the second of five fantasy titles that Atlas started in 1952—far more than any other company. They maintained pretty good quality as well, featuring a wide variety of artists. After a spooky graveyard cover the fun begins inside with "The Stuffed Shirt" wherein an ugly taxidermist goes murderous after his assistant steals his girlfriend.

"Step Into My Coffin" is not quite the weirdie depicted on the cover, but it's a solid story of a man who uses a suspended animation drug in a scheme of life insurance fraud. The crisp art on this dark look at human nature is by infrequent contributor, Martin Rose.

"The Eye That Never Closed" is a winner all around. The plot—a man murders his rich uncle hoping to inherit the estate and then is haunted by the dead man's still-staring eye—is good, and Dick Ayers' distinctive drawing matches it in paranoid intensity. That's followed by an uninspiring page-turner about a man who wears a monstrous



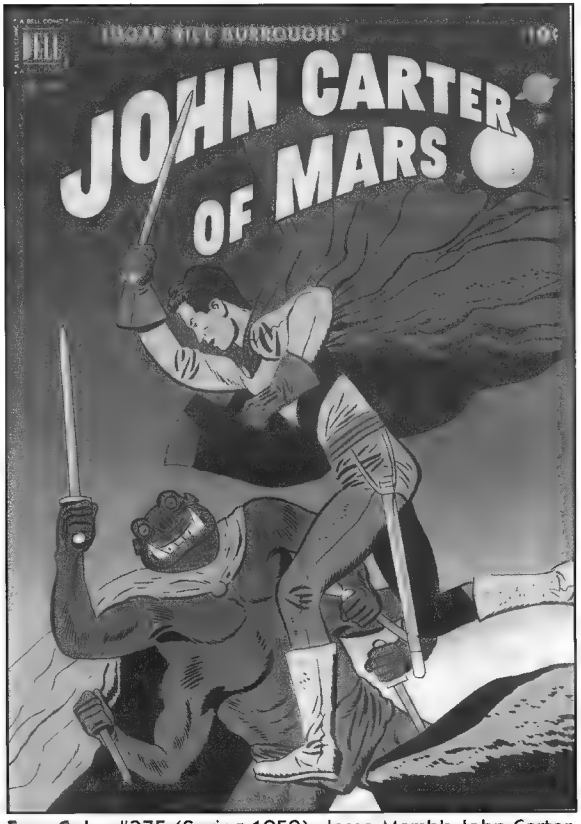
Shock SuspenStories #1 (Feb-Mar 1952) Covers that feature a gallery of faces are often a treat, and Feldstein does not disappoint. His hot-seat classic is the perfect image to introduce their new title.

mask while committing his crimes only to find that his own face changes. "Horror of Crag Island" wraps things up with more murder, more grim irony, and effective illustration.

Dell's *Four Color* #375 (Spring 1952) was their first John Carter of Mars adaptation, translating Edgar Rice Burroughs' novel of interplanetary adventure that first appeared in pulp publication in 1912. The art by Jesse Marsh (who also drew Dell's *Tarzan*) has clean bold outlines adorning the pages with decorative motifs that require little shading or feathering. If it's a little flat at times it's always handsome and serves the narrative well—letting the action maintain a whirlwind pace.

During a battle on Earth, soldier John Carter seeks shelter in a cave where he's overcome by a "strange vapor." Then a beam of light transports him to Mars. There the lighter gravity lets him make enormous leaps and gives him extraordinary strength! This comes in handy—as Mars is composed of warrior cultures whose specialty is hand-to-hand combat. The Martians do have advanced science, with rockets and ray-pistols, and if they've stopped short of using weapons of mass destruction in their warfare they're smarter than we are. Carter quickly takes sides with the local humanoids against four-armed giants. He befriends Dejah Thoris, a young woman whose royal blood makes her a political pawn in need of frequent rescues.

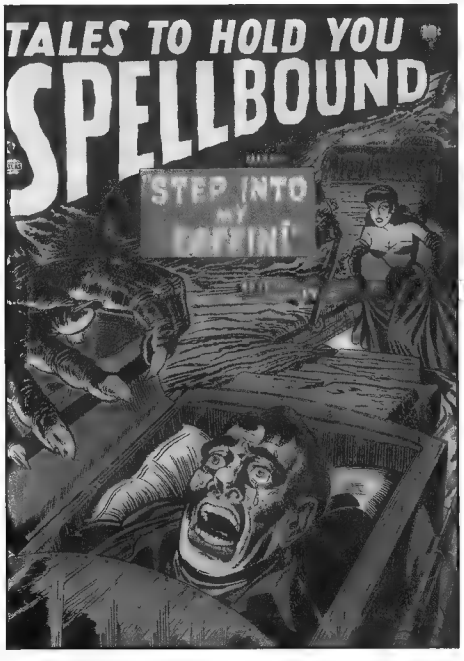
The story and art are both possessed of a simplicity that may seem quaint, but there is a mythic power here—space opera refined to an essence. And Dell's superb format—32-page cover-to-cover novel with supporting material on the inside and back covers—could hardly be improved upon. There were only two more John Carter *Four Color* issues, but the three stand as one of the great accomplishments of the era.



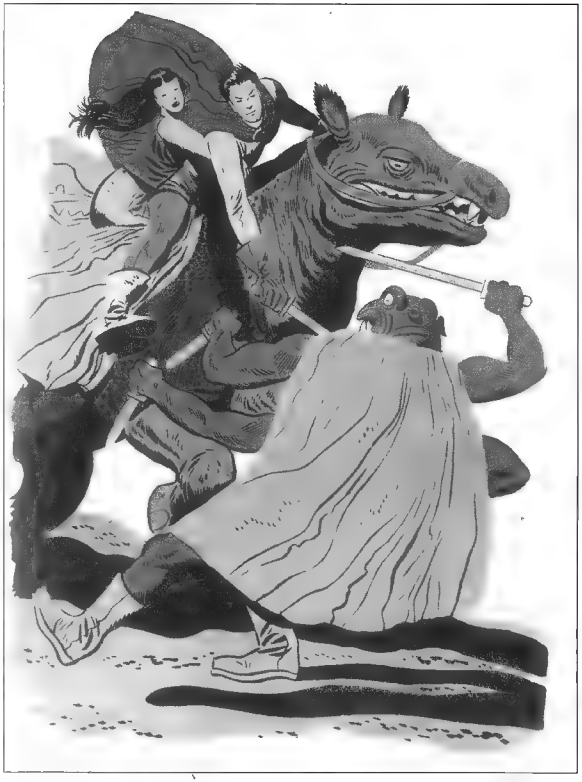
Four Color #375 (Spring 1952). Jesse Marsh's John Carter of Mars cover is heroic enough, but the back cover is even better (see facing page)!

All three of these companies had more big things happen later in 1952. Soon after this John Carter ish Dell released the first issue of the ultimate humor character, Uncle Scrooge. The 21st-century should appreciate both the hilarity and the wisdom of Carl Barks' fables of that cranky capitalist, the world's richest duck. Atlas, in June, boosted their fantasy titles to over a dozen with the addition of *Uncanny Tales* and *Journey Into Mystery*. And, cover-dated October, EC began the title that would prove their salvation when the comics censorship movement fought to bring them down: *Tales Calculated to Drive You MAD*.

As a personal footnote, I was born while the three comics discussed in this article were on the stands, and maybe it's not just coincidence that I've spent so many years collecting and celebrating the books of the early 1950s!



Spellbound #1 (Mar 1952). Atlas produced a lot of graveyard covers in their vast output of pre-Code horror. For the rest of the run the full title was **Stories to Hold You Spellbound**.



Back cover of **Four Color** #375.

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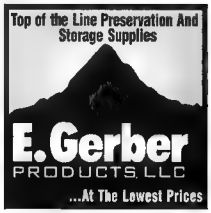

NOLAN'S NOTEBOOK

Lost on the Newsstands:

A CONTRARIAN VIEW OF CHESLER COMICS

by Michelle Nolan

When comics fandom as we know it was forming during the 1960s, a company that had produced no fewer than 31 Golden Age costume heroes had been all but forgotten along with all those characters.

Only two decades after the last of Harry "A" Chesler's incredibly unorthodox comic books hit the stands, only the most knowledgeable fans knew anything about them.

Even fewer fans cared about these often crude but occasionally intriguing relics. Whether in the fan press or the mainstream media, there was no outpour of nostalgia for Dynamic Man, Major Victory, Lady Satan, The Enchanted Dagger and The Black Dwarf.

Then came the astounding two-volume *Photo-Journal Guide to Comic Books* in 1989 and 1990. This monumental project by Ernst and Mary Gerber changed comic book collecting in the 1990s almost as much as the *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* did in the 1970s, following its first appearance in 1970.

By the by, do you realize that Bob Overstreet's series of price guides is now as old as *Action Comics* #1 was when Bob first came out with his groundbreaking book? That's right—32 years!

In the same vein, can you imagine that the *Gerber Photo-Journal* has now been with us for as long as the Golden Age lasted? I consider the Golden Age to be a 13-year period dating from the publication of *Action* #1 in 1938 to the final appearance of the Justice Society in *All Star* Comics #57 in 1951.

I mention this to remind everyone of the ever more intense degree of exposure comic book collectors have had in the past three decades to the rarities of the Golden Age, such as the once totally obscure Chesler group. Even many collectors in their thirties or forties, much less young enthusiasts, do not realize how little knowledge we once had about old comic books.

For some collectors, this knowledge has enhanced their hunger for the old, the odd and the outrageous. For others, comparisons of commercially successful comics with their poor country cousins merely makes us appreciate the mainstream that much more.

Like an independent voter, I claim membership in both camps. I must admit, though, my appreciation for classic characters and creators has increased over the years, while my affection for the cruder comics has declined. And I've wondered about the reasons, especially because I know a fair number of collectors who love titles like *Scoop* and *Punch*.

I guess the ever-increasing cost of obscurities like the Chesler comics has a lot to do with it. While I would be willing to pay $50 for *Mary Marvel* #5 (the only issue I need) and maybe more for a lower-grade copy of one of the six issues of *Comic Cavalcade* on my want list, I honestly wouldn't pay $50 for any Chesler comic—other than to obtain one in order to make a profitable trade for a comic I want.

This is almost personal heresy for me to admit. I once had a bundle of Cheslers and I enjoyed learning about them, if only to share the info in columns like this. From that standpoint, I can still enjoy them, as primitive as they are. But

Skyrocket Comics #1 (nn, 1944 one-shot), packaged by Chesler; compare to the much more polished National and Timely product..

comics like the Cheslers have become worth a lot more to other collectors than they are to me, however much I still may love old, odd and outrageous comics. I doubt if I paid much more than $20 for any of my Cheslers, even into the 1980s, and now you usually see them going for many multiples of that, especially in very good condition or better.

I recall seeing some Super Comics reprints of Dynamic Man stories on the stands circa 1964 (Super was the bandit reprint successor to IW), and wondering where in the world this odd strip came from. They were obviously pre-Code material, yet I had never heard of Dynamic Man. This was a real puzzler at the time, especially since Dynamic Man had been off the stands since 1948. Does anyone else recall what a mystery this was at the time? These comics seemed as though they came from an alternate universe, so strange were they compared to anything else available in 1964!

OKAY, NICK! LET'S SEE YOU USE IT!
"ALIAS THE DRAGON!" HOW'D HE LOCATE THIS HIDEOUT
THE POLICE TIPPED ME OFF! THEY'RE ARRIVING SO!
PULL OUTTA! GET HIM!
LIGHTS OUT! LET ME CAR GOING. PULL ALL GRAB THE DOUGH!
CAN'T SEE YOU! THEY PULLED A FAST ONE ON ME!
THEY SCOOPED UP THEIR LOOT AT THE FOREST INN, TARZAN
HE TAUGHT HE'D TEMPTED JA BUT WE FOOLED HIM
THEN WE'LL GO AHEAD WITH THE BANK JOB EH, NICK?
ALIAS THE DRAGON AND PROWLING AROUND TOWN LIKE NIGHT BEFORE... MAYBE HE'S TRYING TO BEAT US AGAIN! AHA! YOU LOOKING FOR?
CLOCK PLANS OF THE CITY BANKS. JUST HOLDING ON HUNCHES AGAIN

Alias the Dragon (only appearance), Skyrocket Comics #1, one of the most obscure heroes ever!

Higher prices notwithstanding, though, I suppose it is a healthy development for the hobby that the *Gerber Photo-Journal* continues to create a wider variety of interest in obscure comics. My guess is that many more fans now collect older comics pretty much for the covers alone than they once did.

From that standpoint, Cheslers are often a big, big winner. Perhaps only Fox can rival Chesler for having so many superb covers and so many hack interiors. With Fox, the interior art was more often than not awful, but the characters were more than not energy-charged, pulpish fun (The Eagle, The Flame, Phantom Lady, and so many others). With Chesler, the interior art was often solid, especially by George Tuska and Charles Sultan, but the characters and stories made about as little sense as any comic books ever produced.

There were only 57 Cheslers published in the 1941-46 period, plus two issues of *Dynamic* in 1974 that seem like the style of Superior—the company that bought Chesler's titles—yet are credited to Chesler (more on this later). Other than a handful of Chesler humor covers that seem to belong in the 1920s instead of the 40s, an amazing number of covers feature either solid super-heroics or a noirish style of impressionism seldom seen anywhere else.

Hmmmm…it seems as if I'm on the side of Chesler collectors, after all. Or maybe I'm just trying to be fair. After all, any number of accomplished Golden Age artists worked in the Chesler shop circa 1936-46 before going on to much better jobs. I just can't find much merit or sense in the character concepts and stories.

Chesler was one of the few shops that emerged deeply involved in the early Golden Age period as both the publisher of its own titles and a significant packager of comic art for other publishers—and often much larger publishers at that. Some comic book histories credit the Chesler shop with contributing art for more than a dozen other publishers.

Published anecdotes about Chesler have ranged from the fond memories of no less a talent than Joe Kubert, who recalled how kind Chesler was to him as a teenager, to the critical comments of others who have portrayed Chesler as a profane slave-driver. Of one thing we can be certain—Chesler was a definite visionary in the days when publishing comics represented a considerable gamble for the small businessman.

During the 1934-39 period, when the first newsstand (non-premium) modern 10-cent comic books appeared, the vast majority were published by firms that were comparatively well capitalized (National, Dell, McKay, United Features, Eastern, Quality). The Chesler group, though, fits into a fuzzy history that also includes three other minor publishers—Centaur, the Comics Magazine Company and Ultem. The first dozen comics published by Chesler (not just packaged for others) were the first six issues of *Star Comics* and *Star Ranger Funnies* in 1937. The two titles moved on briefly to Ultem and then to Centaur before expiring in 1939 with a history of 23 issues for *Star Comics* and 20 for *Star Ranger*, including #13 and 14 under the title *Cowboy Comics*.

A handful of collectors truly love these old books, especially for the noble cause of digging into the early art credits of people like Jack Cole. More power to them! Otherwise, though, I find these comics to be virtually unreadable, with horribly dated characters and a mixture of black-and-white and one-color toned pages to go with color production that is a far cry from the likes of the *King Comics* or *Detective Comics* of the same era.

The late Howard Keltner, who ranks with Jerry Bails and Roy Thomas in the pantheon of comic historians, managed to compile all of the dozens of brief features—the vast majority were one to four pages—in all 43 of these comics. There were more than 100 different characters! Other than a few comic strip-based features (I'm not sure if these are reprints or ripoffs), every one of these strips is as obscure as anything ever done in the history of comic books.

A CHESLER CONTRARIAN

So, from the standpoint of most collectors who like Cheslers, the history of the company begins at what wound up being the worst possible time for Harry Chesler to get back into publishing his own comics—late in 1941.

Not only did the United States enter World War II, but the comic book phenomenon of late 1941 resembled in many ways the overcrowded dot-com field before the 2000-2001 implosion. Comics historian Dan Stevenson, to whom I am indebted for data, notes that the number of newsstand comic books went from 320 in 1939 to 695 in 1940 to 839 in 1941!

Those factors helped to overcrowd the newsstands and to create the first implosion in comics history, even though the total number of comic books increased slightly in 1942 to 934. So why was this an implosion? Because it's a little-known fact that not a single new company entered the field with a newsstand comic book dated 1942!

That's correct—there were several new comic publishers in 1941, but absolutely none in 1942. The war may have been the primary factor, but I also believe that the newsstands simply became too suddenly overcrowded. And those wonderful 68-page comics (counting covers) took up twice as much room in 1942 as did their 36-page successors a decade later! That is not a factor to be overlooked.

However, it's hard to blame Chesler for looking at the comic book boom in 1941 and responding by getting back into the four-color fray. He turned in an admirable but remarkably unsuccessful attempt, considering that his product—for once—was relatively decent. This consisted of four costume hero titles covering a dozen 68-page Cheslers—*Yankee* #1-4, *Dynamic* #1-3, *Scoop* #1-3 and *Punch* #1-2, with the first issues appearing in September, October, November and December 1941, respectively.

DYNAMIC MAN
THAT'S JACK VOLAND BESIDE THAT TRUCK DRIVER! THEY'RE NOT STOPPING FOR THE LIGHT!
THAT COP RECOGNIZES ME MAX! PULL OVER QUICK AND C. P. HUH
YEAH, HE'S PULLING HIS RODS! WATCH ME KNOCK HIM OFF JACK!

Splash from **Dynamic Comics** #23 (Nov 1944), published by Superior but packaged with Chesler art.

If you are not a Chesler completist—and how many of those are there? —yet you still want a few Cheslers, I recommend getting one or two apiece of these dozen issues. They aren't cheap, but you can still sometimes find them in "good" for less than $100, except for the humor cover for *Scoop* #1.

It's interesting to note that even though no new companies published comics dated 1942, Chesler was one of only five companies that expired at least temporarily that year, among a total of 30 different publishers. The others were Fox (which came back in 1944), Centaur (gone for good), Great (which published only two titles for a total of six comics in 1941-42) and Progressive (which published only one title, the three-issue run of *Bang-Up Comics*).

Even in the early 1940s, the rich just got richer in comics. It should be noted that the top six publishers—DC, Dell, Fawcett, Quality, Marvel and Fiction House—produced more comics than the other 24 publishers, 502 to 432. In the entire history of the field, comic book publishing has never really been lucrative except for the big guns. In fact, what I think is amazing about old comics is how many dozens of small publishers have been willing to try to crack the field.

Chesler, like Fox, re-entered comics publishing in 1944 and for three years tried a little of everything in the way of weird story and cover concepts, with apparently minimal success since most of these issues are scarce if not rare. The *Gerber Photo-Journal* popularized many of these Chesler issues, since several have bizarre, impressionistic covers. By 1946, Chesler was down to three quarterly titles—*Dynamic* (which resumed with #8 in 1944), *Punch* (which picked up with #9 in 1944) and *Red Seal* (which started with #14 in 1945).

The Canadian publisher Superior—which distributed its titles in both Canada and the United States and lasted through 1956—took over the Chesler titles in 1947, with the possible exception of *Dynamic* #21 and 22. These two 1947 issues have Superior-style covers but have been credited to Chesler. At any rate, Superior definitely published *Dynamic* #23-24 along with *Punch* #20-23 and *Red Seal* #19-22 (the *Photo-Journal* has incorrect dates for those issues of *Punch*). But Superior abandoned all three titles by early in 1948.

Other than *Dynamic* and *Punch*, look at Chesler's "lineup" for 1944—*Major Victory* #1-2, *Snap* #9, *Jest* #10-11 and *Bulls-Eye* #11 (with the only Lady Satan cover), in addition to *Spotlight* #1 and the *Skyrocket* one-shot with the notorious air war cover. And check out 1945—*Carnival* #1, *Scoop* #8, *Jester* #10, *Komic Pages* #10, *Kayo* #12, *Major Victory* #3, and *Spotlight* #2-3, in addition to *Dynamic*, *Punch* and *Red Seal*.

George Tuska did some nifty work for Chesler, and you may find many of the covers bizarre enough to be collectable. But for the most part, I consider these to be among the most overrated of Golden Age comics.

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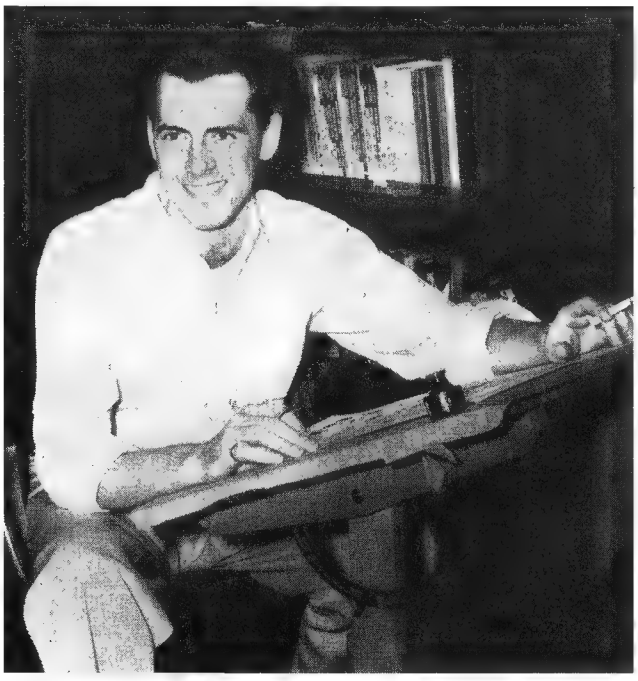
Comics fandom was deeply saddened to hear of Johnny Craig's passing last September 13th, two days after the tragic events of 9/11. He was truly one of the more talented comic artists who ever worked in the industry and one of the first professionals I ever met. He was also the first comic artist I ever interviewed, during a visit I made to his home in 1969. Johnny was a very kind soul indeed who loved to work quietly at home in his studio. He was also the sort of artist who could talk sincerely about art and ambitions, and make you feel comfortable. What a grand gentleman and a true artist of heart and mind! He was an accomplished storyteller who always gave a job his full attention and strived to make the next one better than his last.

JOHNNY CRAIG AN EC ICON!

by Roger Hill

John Thomas Alexis Craig was born in the peaceful little town of Pleasantville, New York, on April 25, 1926. At the age of three his family moved to New York City where they took up residence in Washington Heights. As a young boy entering the public school system he had a natural interest and ability in drawing and reading the comics. At the age of eleven he entered a school contest and won first prize. Two years later, at the tender age of thirteen, Johnny secured a job during after-school hours working as an assistant to comic book artist Harry Lampert.



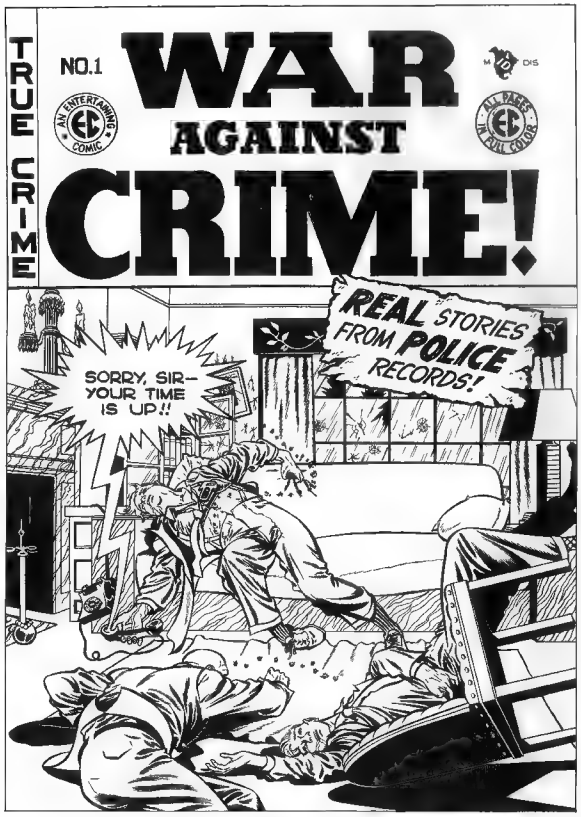
The year was 1939 and Lampert was drawing "The King—Master of Disguise" for *All-American Comics*, published by the All-American/National Periodical group. The All-American offices, headed by Max Gaines, were located in downtown Manhattan at 225 LaFayette Street. Johnny Craig had met Lampert through a mutual friend whose father owned the local candy store. Both Lampert and Craig frequented the candy store because aside from stocking a great selection of candy, they also stocked—you guessed it—a full line of comics!

Johnny was hired as an assistant to Lampert for

one dollar a week. His first responsibility was to keep the clip-file morgue updated. Later on he was allowed to rule panels and borders and erase pencils. Up to this point, Johnny's knowledge of the fine arts had been very limited. Lampert decided to educate him a little bit by taking him to the Metropolitan Museum of Art where he was first introduced to the great masters of art. John especially fell in love with the impressionists like Van Gogh, Monet, Mattisse, Degas and others.

Two years later, shortly after Pearl Harbor, Lampert left for military duty. Lampert's good friend and editor at All-American, Sheldon Mayer, took Johnny on as a free-lance letterer for his daily newspaper strip called *Scribbly*. When John got out of school in early 1943, Mayer invited him down to work full time as a staff artist for All-American. John's duties here included doing paste-up, making corrections, lettering and whatever else was called for. Years later in an interview that this author conducted (published in the EC fanzine *Squa Tront* #4) Johnny remembered fondly the times he had spent assisting these artists and commented, "I want to say that I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to both Sheldon Mayer and Harry Lampert. As a rather wild young kid I know I gave both plenty of headaches and problems, but they were patient and understanding and seemed to have more knowledge and faith in my own future than I did."

In 1943, after a short hitch with the Merchant Marines, John joined the Army and eventually saw action in Germany. He returned to civilian life in 1946 and went back into the field of comics doing free-lance crime and western work for various publishers including Fox, M.E. and Lev Gleason. It was around this same time that Max Gaines sold out his interest in All-American to Harry Donenfeld at National and started his own EC (Educational Comics) line. Johnny Craig joined Max's production staff and shortly thereafter created his first comic cover for *Moon Girl* #1, dated Fall 1947. He also drew his first and only Moon Girl story titled "The Rustlers of Ransom Gap" (*Moon Girl* #2, Winter 1947/1948).



(above) The artist's first crime cover for EC was **War Against Crime** #1 (Spring 1948). While it's a classic example of one of EC's earliest and more violent covers, it's also the only cover that Craig never signed.

When Max Gaines died unexpectedly in August 1947, the company switched over to producing crime, western and romance comics under the direction of Max's son, Bill. When regular *Moon Girl* artist Shelly Moldoff got the okay from Bill Gaines to produce his *Tales of the Supernatural* horror comic in March of 1948, Johnny was hired by Moldoff to draw a five-page story called "Zombie Terror" for the project along with the first issue's cover. After *Tales of the Supernatural* got shelved, "Zombie Terror" wound up being used in *Moon Girl* #5 (Fall 1948). This story is recognized today as

(right) These early Pre-Trend panels (**War Against Crime** #9, Oct/Nov 49) demonstrate John's talent of drawing the human figure in action. Different sized panels along with different angles keep the story interesting.

ART © WILLIAM M. GAINES AGENT, INC

AH, WE MEET AGAIN, DEAR READER! HEH, HEH, HEH...WELCOME...WELCOME ONCE MORE TO THE VAULT OF HORROR! THIS TIME I HAVE BROUGHT OUT A SPECIAL STORY FOR YOU THAT WILL CHILL THE BLOOD IN YOUR VEINS...AND PERHAPS MAKE YOU STOP AND WONDER A MOMENT WHEN NEXT YOU MEET YOUR BEST FRIEND...HEH, HEH! THIS LITERARY GEM OF HORRIBLE UNPLEASANTRIES IS, OF COURSE, FROM MY PRIVATE COLLECTION, AND I CALL IT...
PORTRAIT IN WAX!
JOHNNY CRAIG

When readers opened up their copies of **Vault of Horror** #12 (#1) (Apr/May 1950) they got their first glimpse of Johnny Craig's new Vault-Keeper interpretation. This "GhouLunatic horror host" would be very popular with EC readers for the next four years.

one of EC's first published horror stories and one of the best Pre-Trend horror stories of all time.

John became one of EC's main artists, contributing to Gaines' new Pre-Trend crime and western titles. He drew every cover for *Crime Patrol* and *War Against Crime* between 1948 and 1950, a total of twenty-one issues! He also provided covers and stories for Bill's western titles *Saddle Justice* and *Gunfighter*. Having no formal art training up to this point Johnny struggled with turning out the amount of work that Bill Gaines wanted from him each month. He regarded each assignment as a learning experience, taking the extra time to draw and redraw something in order to learn more and, hopefully, improve on his last job.

For several years John and Al Feldstein shared the same office at EC and practically the same desk. In late 1949 they even started working together in a collaborative effort to earn more money quickly, the idea being that they could turn out the work faster if one artist penciled and the other inked. In the long run, it didn't help much and the two artists soon returned to working on their own. John excelled in creating top-notch cover ideas for Gaines' crime comics, several of which are recognized as classics today. His first effort was reproduced on the cover of *War Against Crime* #1 (Spring 1948). Although it is unsigned, the cover is a great example of classic EC and Johnny Craig. It is also one of the most violent covers created for a Pre-Trend cover. In typical EC tradition (before it became tradition) all of the gangsters on the cover have already been shot dead. A voice heard over the phone receiver lying off the hook says "SORRY, SIR—YOUR TIME IS UP!!"

Most of Johnny's succeeding covers depicted gangsters and cops shooting it out. Of these, many were confrontational scenes that took place at night, affording the artist a chance to apply a lot of contrasting shading, with dark backgrounds lit up by spotlights, car headlights and flashlights. Most of these early efforts show a heavy influence by one of Johnny's favorite artists—Will Eisner. John had saved and studied every *Spirit* Sunday section from the beginning of the strip in 1940. He loved Eisner's film-noir storytelling techniques and used them whenever he felt the need. His work also showed a great fondness and respect for the art of Milton Caniff.

Craig was always partial to 'walking dead' stories, and "Zombie" is one of his earliest and best efforts, complete with Voodoo ceremonies, jungle drums, dancing natives and oh, yes...flies. **Crypt of Terror** #19 (Aug/Sep1950).

In the spring of 1950, Gaines decided to introduce his "New Trend" horror and crime titles and it was Johnny who provided their first covers and stories. Years later in his 1970 interview presented in *Squa Tront* #4, the artist said "I seem to recall being quite pleased with the idea of coming out with a new line of material that we felt would sell very well, that would be interesting to both write and draw. I was pleased but I don't think I had much to do with the actual decision. I give credit to Al And Bill for getting the brainstorm."

Gaines and Feldstein decided right from the beginning to create horror host characters for the new line of comic books. The characters would help to warm up the audience, so to speak, before the horror got underway. These "GhouLunatics"—as they eventually became known—would introduce the New Trend horror stories to readers in an amusing manner. The horror stories were first tested in *Crime Patrol* and *War Against Crime*, then later on given their own titles *The Crypt of Terror* (later changed to *Tales From the Crypt*) and *The Vault of Horror*. Al Feldstein actually drew the first two installments of The Crypt-Keeper and Vault-Keeper stories and thus gets credit for the initial design of both characters. Shortly after that, Johnny took the Vault-Keeper, developed him visually, and refined the character which readers became accustomed to over the next four years.

When Gaines decided to add a third horror title, *The Haunt of Fear*, John provided covers and stories for the new book which debuted in May of 1950. Craig, who always had an affection for writing his own material, was soon banging out the cackling introductions and stories for the various horror titles he worked on. Unlike Gaines or Feldstein, Johnny did not read the pulp magazines for ideas. He did take a correspondence course on the G.I. Bill to study the fundamental techniques of good writing. His favorite story themes were vampires, voodoo, zombies, the walking dead and all the psychological aspects of fear itself. He preferred stories that were basically simple. Johnny believed that stories that were too involved or complicated would only confuse, rather than clarify. There was also some degree of influence on his style of writing that came from close exposure to Al Feldstein and his heavy output at EC. Bill Gaines was another factor, since generally he read over all the scripts, discussed them in conferences and gave his okay to proceed, sometimes with changes indicated.

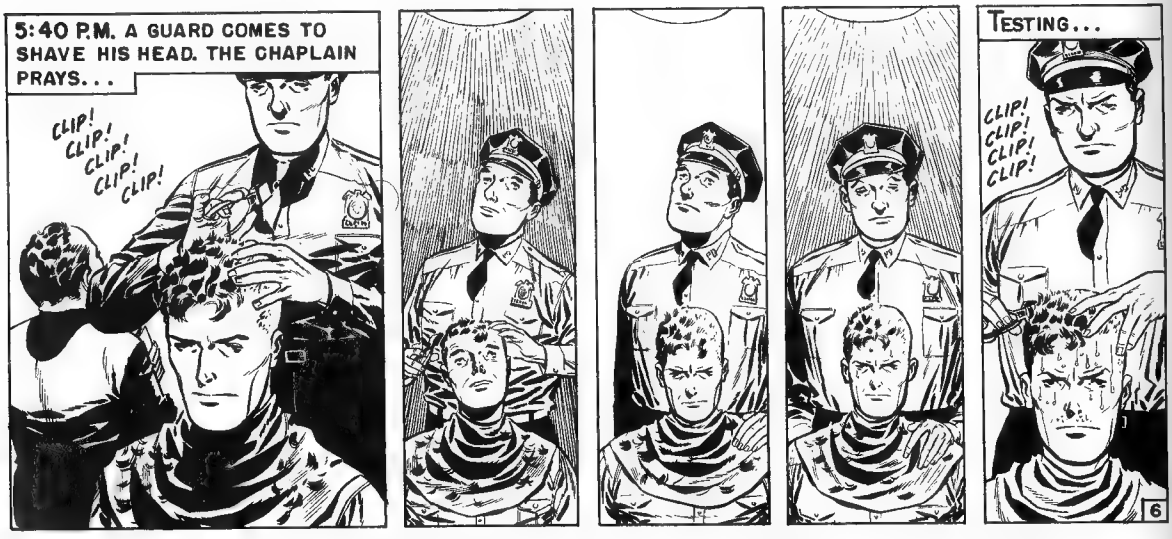
THERE! I'M FINISHED! I FEEL BETTER NOW THAT SHE'S OUT OF THE WAY! HA! NOW TO FIND SNOOKY... AND KILL HER...
I SEARCHED THE HOUSE FROM CELLAR TO ATTIC! I COULDN'T FIND SNOOKY! AGAIN I SEARCHED... MORE CAREFULLY THIS TIME, AND STILL COULDN'T FIND HER! SHE WASN'T IN THE HOUSE...
BLAST IT! WHERE IS THAT CAT?! NOT IN THE HOUSE... I RANSACKED THIS PLACE SEVERAL TIMES... WAIT!
THE WALL!... THE WALL WHERE CLARA IS BURIED! SNOOKY WAS TRYING TO GET BEHIND IT... MAYBE SHE SNEAKED OVER THE WALL WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING... ???
THAT MUST BE WHAT HAPPENED! SNOOKY WANTED TO BE WITH CLARA! HA! HA! NOW THEY'LL BE TOGETHER... FOREVER! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!
SUDDENLY I FELT EXHAUSTED. NOW THAT IT WAS ALL OVER, I BEGAN TO TREMBLE SLIGHTLY! THE FEAR OF KILLING CLARA AND SNOOKY WAS NOW OVERTAKING ME...
I... I MUST CONTROL MYSELF!... NEED REST... I'LL... I'LL SLEEP... GO TO BED!
FULLY CLOTHED, I COLLAPSED ON THE BED AND INSTANTLY WAS ASLEEP. BUT I SLEPT FITFULLY, BEING PLAGUED BY TERRIFYING NIGHTMARES OF CLARA... AND CATS!

"The Wall" from **Haunt of Fear** #15 (actually the first issue, May/Jun 1950) was called "a psychological study" in horror and shows some of the powerful influence that Will Eisner had on his work.

Once the script was approved, it usually took Johnny a half a day to a full day to do the rough layout pacing of panels and text for a seven- or eight-page story. Then the actual drawing would begin, and this is where things slowed down a bit. Johnny was rarely satisfied with his first attempt to draw anything and consequently was one of EC's slowest artists. He spent a great deal of time at the office during the daytime and evening hours trying to find a schedule to turn out more work. By putting in more hours at the drawing board John was able to produce, on an average, one cover and one story per month. While his early Pre-Trend EC stories sometimes demonstrated sparse backgrounds, or no backgrounds at all, his use of narrative pictures and story-telling techniques were always handled intelligently.

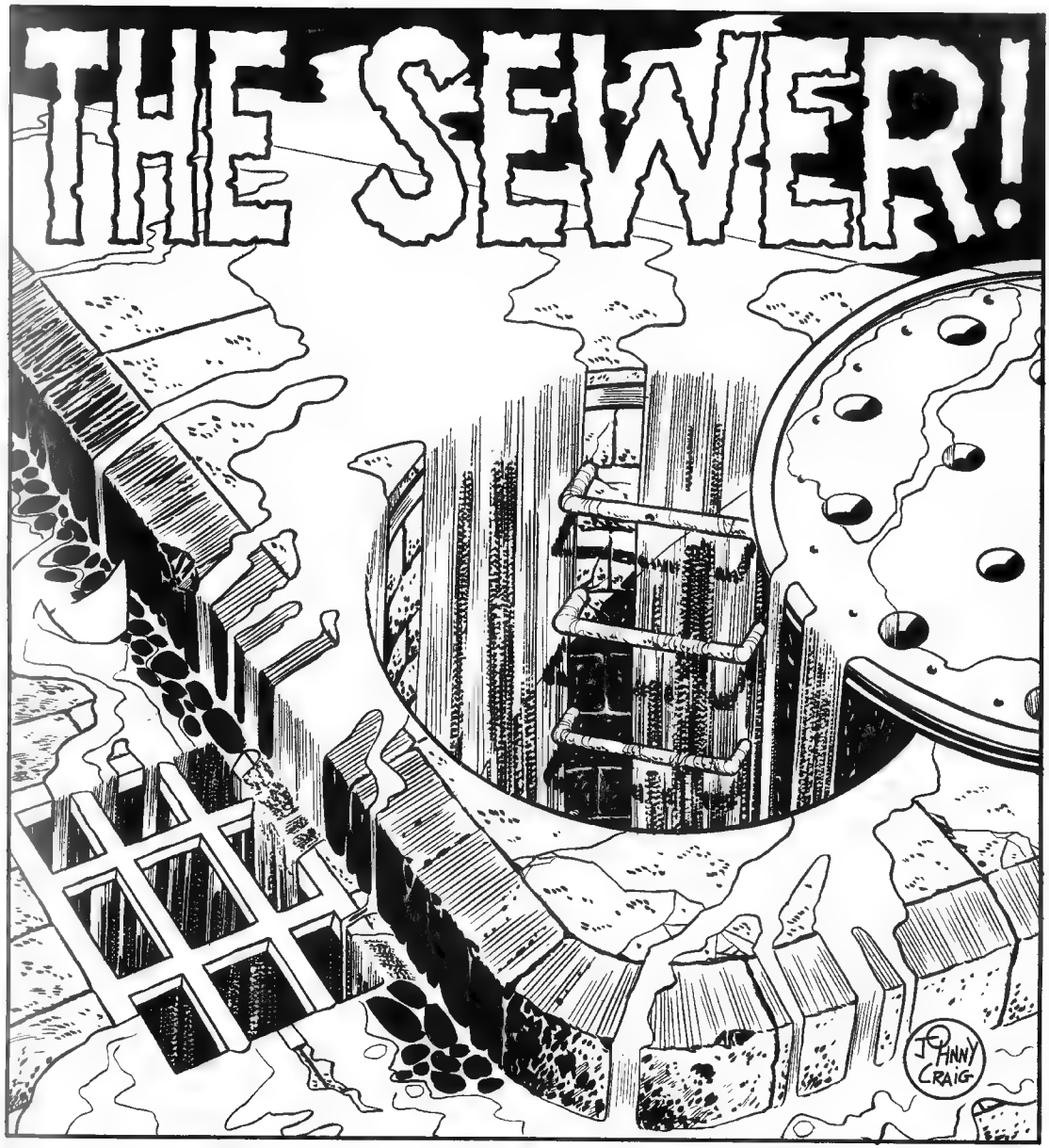
During the summer of 1950, Paul Kast, a young struggling law student working as an assistant to Bill Gaines, came up with an idea to further exploit EC's three GhouLunatic horror hosts. He suggested that they create real photographic images of each horror host, which could then be sold to readers through the mail. With Gaines' approval, the plan was put into motion. Johnny Craig was elected to be the model for each of these characters. Shortly thereafter, a fright wig was secured from a theatrical store. A chunk of old corduroy was used for the shroud. Johnny rubber-cemented long paper fingernails in place and Al Feldstein applied facial make-up to him. The final result was startling! Once the final photographs were completed, Johnny added a little artistic touch-up to each photo, and included an inscription on each one as well. The announcement of GhouLunatic Photos appeared in all the EC horror titles that hit the newsstands in late 1950, offering them for ten cents apiece or all three for twenty-five cents. Over the next two years this project brought in a couple of thousand dollars for EC. Gaines, being the generous fellow he was, decided to let Paul Kast keep all the money to help cover his tuition expenses.

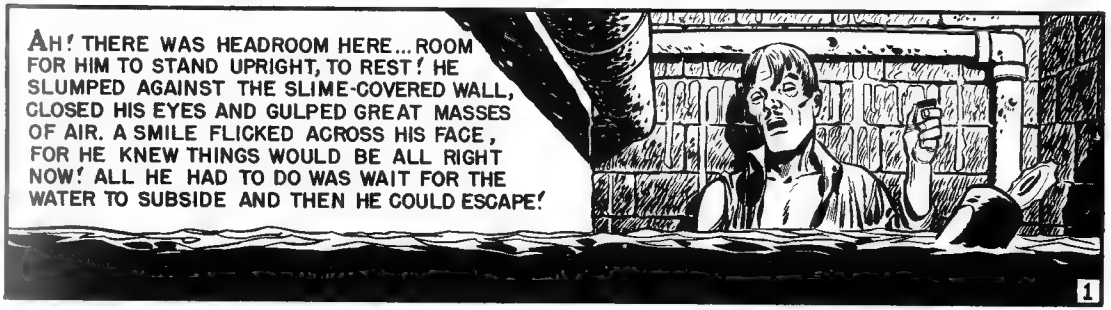
In late 1950 Gaines added *Crime SuspenStories* to the EC roster and Johnny began doing the cover and lead story for each issue. He also took the opportunity to create some of the most ingenious introduction pages that he had ever done up to this point. Beginning with *Crime SuspenStories* #1 (Oct/Nov1950) and for the next four issues, John produced splash pages which were, in effect, tributes to Will Eisner's *Spirit* work. One of Johnny's finest efforts during this period came in *Crime SuspenStories* #5 (Jun/Jul 1951) for the story titled "The Sewer." This eight-page story showcases some of the artist's finest talents in atmospheric storytelling and is considered an EC classic. As the story also demonstrates, Johnny Craig was beginning to grow tremendously as an artist. His panel backgrounds had begun to fill in with much more detail and his figure work was improving con-



(above) Almost two years before Bernie Krigstein arrived at EC with his "multiple-panel storytelling technique," Johnny Craig was already using it, as seen in this page from "The Execution" (**Crime SuspenStories** #12, Aug/Sep 1952). As Johnny revealed many years later, he was a big fan of Krigstein's art

(facing page) An eight-page story titled "The Sewer!" was a Johnny Craig tour de force and appeared in Gaines' **Crime SuspenStories** #5 (Jun/Jul 1951). The attention to detail and Craig's great respect for Will Eisner's work is very obvious here.


THE SEWER!
JOHNNY CRAIG


AH! THERE WAS HEADROOM HERE... ROOM FOR HIM TO STAND UPRIGHT, TO REST! HE SLUMPED AGAINST THE SLIME-COVERED WALL, CLOSED HIS EYES AND GULPED GREAT MASSES OF AIR. A SMILE FLICKED ACROSS HIS FACE, FOR HE KNEW THINGS WOULD BE ALL RIGHT NOW! ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS WAIT FOR THE WATER TO SUBSIDE AND THEN HE COULD ESCAPE!
1

siderably. His male figures had always been well drawn, but his females were only adequate in the beginning.

By late 1951 Johnny's females were beginning to shape up considerably. Their faces began to look prettier and their figures were improving. Years later in an interview the artist admitted, "It began to be a pleasure to draw them. I deliberately wrote stories where I could draw one woman rather than have a whole slew of other characters all over the place." Drawing great looking women was not the only thing that John began to excel at. When it came to serving up horror and violence, there were few at EC who could do it better. Especially when it came to covers. Three of Johnny's more famous were *Crime SuspenStories* #20 and 22 and *Vault of Horror* #32. The cover of *CSS* #20 (Dec/Jan 1954) was a close-up of the face of a dead man who has been hanged and wound up as an example in Dr. Fredric Wertham's 1954 book on comics and juvenile delinquency, *Seduction of the Innocent*.

Craig drew his own likeness (as did other EC stalwarts) into this classic EC parody titled "Kamen's Kalamity" (drawn by fellow EC regular Jack Kamen) in **Tales From the Crypt** #31 (Aug/Sep 1952). Note Bill Gaines in a dual role.

It still remains a complete mystery to comic collectors how Wertham could have possibly missed seeing (and footnoting in his book) the Craig cover for *Crime SuspenStories* #22 (Apr/May 1954) which is every bit as frightening or violent as *CSS* #20. *Crime SuspenStories* #22 depicts a man holding a woman's head in one hand, a bloody axe in the other, and the woman's body (from the neck down) is seen lying on the floor in the background. Gory beyond belief? Probably. A bad influence on kids? Not at all. Entertainment for the masses? Most definitely! For whatever is said about this cover, it remains one of the most violent and closely scrutinized EC covers in comics history. It has been written about in countless magazine articles over the years including *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Playboy* and many others. It also became a key piece of evidence at the Senate Subcommittee investigation hearings on juvenile delinquency held in New York City in 1954. This particular media event brought forth an exchange between one Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee and publisher Bill Gaines which wound up being quoted by different newspapers all across the country. The exchange went something like this:

Senator Kefauver: "Here is your May issue. This seems to be a man with a bloody axe holding a woman's head up which has been severed from her body. Do you think that is in good taste?"

Mr. Gaines: "Yes sir, I do. For the cover of a horror comic. A cover in bad taste, for example, might be defined as holding the head a little higher so that the neck could be seen dripping blood from it and moving the body over a little further so that the neck of the body could be seen to be bloody."

Senator Kefauver: "You have blood coming out of her mouth."

Mr. Gaines: "A little."

If truth be told, the original cover art for *CSS* #22 did show the head being held a little higher, with blood dripping from the neck, when John originally turned it in. Someone at EC, most likely Gaines himself, rejected this idea at the last minute and had Johnny revise the cover art. The result had the main image shifted down a half inch to where the bottom could be cut off. Johnny then filled in the top section to compensate for the shift. Since EC caught such heavy flak anyway over this cover (even after they self-censored it), it seems a real shame today that it ever got censored in the first place.

Johnny's cover for *The Vault of Horror* #32 (Aug/Sep 1953) was also censored before it got released to the newsstands. The cover originally showed a man opening a door and looking quite shocked at a man standing there with a meat cleaver sticking out of his head. Although EC house ads for this particular issue showed the cover as it was originally drawn, the cleaver was completely gone when the final comic came out. The man was left now with only blood trickling down the front of his face.

In his *Squa Tront* #4 interview in 1970 John's response was straight-forward about producing overly violent art for EC: "In retrospect, most of the stories seem rather tame in comparison to some of the things that are in view today; but at the time I do think many of the stories were too gory, too ugly, simply too gruesome for my particular taste in horror tales. But then, they were horror tales, not ghost stories, and horror can be many things to many people."

Other than the half dozen crime or horror covers he did, John usually tried to present more subdued themes than most for his covers at EC. Many fans consider his *Vault of Horror* #28 cover to be one of his finest. The scene depicts a half decomposed zombie woman tied to a stake as natives dance and chant in a circle around her. Years later, Johnny remembered "I always preferred the voodoo type of story or the haunted house type or a story with a mystical theme rather than a tale that had its impact relying on blood and gore and similar shock values. I think if you were to go back through any of the issues I did, you'll find that most of my stories are on a quieter vein of horror than either the *Haunt of Fear* or *Crypt of Terror*."

The walking dead or return from the grave themes seemed to be utilized by Johnny more than others. He was also very fond of vampire stories and covers. One of his best vampire covers was for *Vault of Horror* #20 (Aug/Sep1951) depicting a scene in a darkened basement where a mob of violent people have just discovered the coffin of a vampire and are pounding a stake through his heart. The reader doesn't get to see the vampire at all, but at a glance, you realize what is happening and you don't need to see him. Just the excitement of the mob and the looks on their faces carry the emotional impact of this cover all the way to the bank. When asked about this cover some years ago Johnny responded with "I think of Wood when I see the cover of #20. He inspired that cover, probably, to handle that type of situation (see *Tales From the Crypt* #26). It's another example of spotting something an artist does and trying to see if it works for you."

Beginning with issue #36 Johnny was given the editorship of *The Vault of Horror*. As editor he decided to give the book a different outlook and a different appearance to represent his approach to the feeling of horror. He wanted to see if he could interpret that feeling and make it successful. His covers for *The Vault of Horror* #36 through the last issue, #40, were definitely different interpretations from what had come before—the horror element was toned down quite a bit. As part of the new facelift, Johnny decided The Vault-Keeper needed a new companion, and beginning with issue #37, introduced Drusilla to the readers. Drusilla was a young, vivacious lady who never spoke a word or smiled. Her heavy lipstick, blank stare and ruby medallion necklace

TOUCH and GO!
WILLIAM ACTON ROSE TO HIS FEET. THE CLOCK ON THE MANTEL TICKED MIDNIGHT. HE LOOKED AT HIS FINGERS AND HE LOOKED AT THE LARGE ROOM AROUND HIM AND HE LOOKED AT THE MAN NAMED ARTHUR HUXLEY LYING ON THE FLOOR WHO WAS DEAD AND WOULD SAY NO MORE SAYINGS NOR BRUTALIZE MORE BRUTALITIES. WILLIAM ACTON, WHOSE FINGERS HAD STROKED TYPEWRITER KEYS AND MADE LOVE AND FRIED HAM AND EGGS FOR EARLY BREAKFASTS, HAD NOW ACCOMPLISHED A MURDER WITH THOSE SAME TEN WHORLED FINGERS...

"Touch and Go!" represents the artist's only EC adaptation of a Ray Bradbury story, from **Crime SuspenStories** #17 (Jun/Jul 1953). This eight-page story demonstrates how a perfect blend of writing and artistic talent can create a classic of psychological horror. John used real fingerprints to help illustrate it.

gave her the appearance of a Vampira type, waiting patiently to put the bite on someone. She was gorgeous and became a popular new fixture in *The Vault of Horror* for four issues. Unfortunately, due to distribution pressure and media condemnation, which Gaines had already been fighting for a long time, *The Vault of Horror* took its last breath with issue #40 in December of 1954.

Gaines' other horror and crime titles soon followed suit, and in the spring of 1955 EC launched their "New Direction" comic titles consisting of *Aces High*, *Extra!*, *Impact*, *M.D.*, *Psychoanalysis* and *Valor*. Johnny was given the editorship of *Extra!*, a comic about the adventures of newspaper reporter Keith Michaels and his secretary Vicky who worked for the World Press News Service. Johnny was delighted to leave the horror books behind and enjoyed now having the chance to handle more adult subject matter, even in the face of Comic Code rules and restrictions which

Craig did some of his finest illustrative efforts for Gaines' new comic magazine titled **Terror Illustrated** #1 (Nov/Dec 1955). The new "Picto-Fiction" format allowed the artist greater freedom with technique and style. "The Gorilla's Paw" was drawn with brush and ink and charcoal pencil on pebble paper.

Gaines' comics were now subscribing to in order to get distribution. Johnny also got the assignment to create all of the covers for the new *M.D.* comic, devoted to stories of doctors and the medical profession.

Unfortunately the New Direction books didn't go over well, partly because Bill Gaines still couldn't get the proper distribution he needed. Finally, in late 1955, Gaines decided to shut down the New Direction titles and revamp the line into a new black and white comic magazine format called "EC Picto-Fiction." The new titles were *Crime Illustrated*, *Terror Illustrated* and *Shock Illustrated*, with *Confessions Illustrated* being added a little later. It was a brilliant new concept and one that allowed EC to jump right back into doing the horror and crime comics they had been so successful with before. With the magazine format, Gaines could now operate without the Comics Code interfering and, since the magazines were mostly in black and white, it gave the artists an opportunity to experiment with different forms of illustrative techniques. The Picto-Fictions utilized narrative text with pictures to tell the stories. It was a more "adult" approach to comics and Johnny and the other EC artists were happy to demonstrate a broader scope of their talents as they began turning out some of their finest work ever.

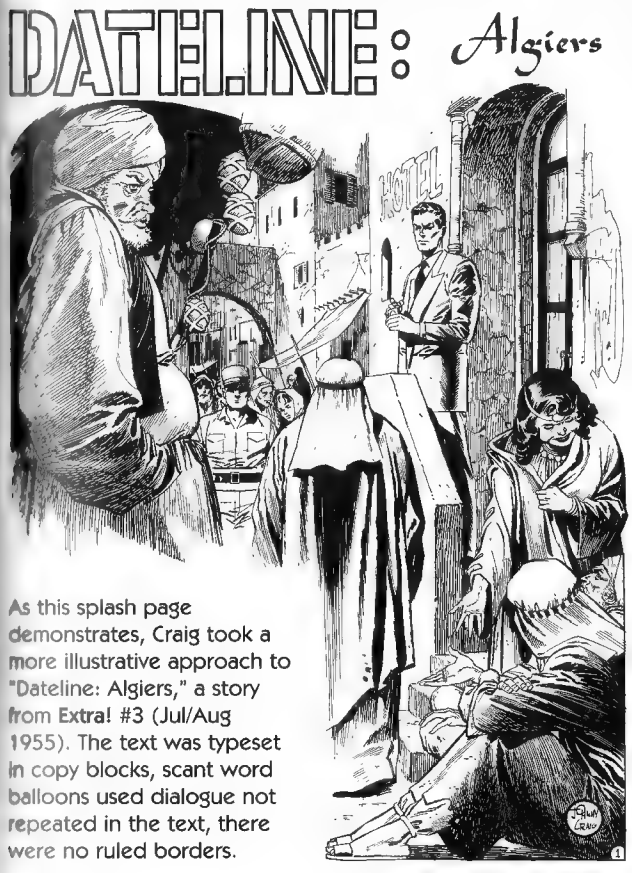
Johnny immediately tackled a twelve-page horror story that was a rewrite and expansion of a story that had previously appeared in *Haunt of Fear* #9 titled "The Gorilla's Paw." Craig labored over this story using a combination of conte crayon and brush and ink to capture the new look he wanted. The final result was a softer-looking, more textured style of art, reminiscent of pulp illustration. "The Gorilla's Paw" appeared in *Terror Illustrated* #1, dated Nov/Dec 1955. His next story was a twelve-page crime job called "Pieces of Hate," which was actually a reworking of a Reed Crandall story from *Crime SuspenStories* #22. Oddly enough, this is the same axe-murderer story that Johnny's famous cover for *Crime SuspenStories* #22 was originally based on. The splash page is an incredible and lavish soft-pencil illustration depicting the axe-murderer approaching his wife with the axe hidden behind his back. The famous scene used on the cover of *Crime SuspenStories* #22 was never shown in this story.

John had not drawn any romance stories for EC since late 1949 when he worked on a couple of stories for Gaines' early *Modern Love* title. For EC's new *Confessions Illustrated* magazine, Johnny contributed two twelve-page stories. The first one, titled "Passion Made Me A Thief," is beautifully illustrated, but the second one, called "Man Crazy" (*Confessions Illustrated* #2, May 1956), is an acknowledged masterpiece. Every panel of every page of this story features one of the sexiest Johnny Craig girls ever created by this artist. He pulled out all the stops on this one

using conte crayon, straight pen, brush and ink, Zip-A-Tone overlays and even charcoal pencil on heavy textured art paper. The effects and subtle toning were amazing indeed and made this effort one of his finest achievements at EC.

In his *Squa Tront* interview, conducted in 1969, Johnny said this about working on the Picto-Fiction magazines: "I enjoyed it very much. I think most of the artists did. It was a great challenge in that even though we were allowed a greater freedom in depicting the story, it required a greater ability to do the job right. All in all, it was a very fine experience and something which I think most of the artists welcomed because it made us feel we were advancing and doing a better grade of artwork—a more illustrative type of artwork. I'm sorry it didn't go over better than it did."

The "adult" reading public was not ready for Picto-Fiction comic magazines in 1956, and after two or three issues of each title had come out the magazines were dropped. "Man Crazy" was Johnny's last published work for EC. Some of the artists at EC who had worked on *MAD* and Panic were able to continue with *MAD* when Gaines and Kurtzman converted it over to the magazine format. Johnny, who had never worked for *MAD*, or tried to do humor work, decided it was time to get out of the comics field. He took a job working in an art studio where almost all the work related to television commercials. In 1960 he and his family moved to Pennsylvania where he became the Vice President and Art Director of a large motion picture advertising firm. Several years later, due to the pressures inherent in that type of job, Johnny decided to go free-lance. He still concentrated on advertising art, but on the side he began to take on an occasional comic story for ACG (American Comics Group). It was in late 1963 when he started working on his first comeback job for this company. That effort was a Comics Code-approved fantasy story that appeared in *Unknown Worlds* #36 dated Dec/Jan 1964. This eleven-page story, "The People vs. Hendricks," showed that Johnny Craig was just as good an artist as he ever was.



As this splash page demonstrates, Craig took a more illustrative approach to "Dateline: Algiers," a story from Extra! #3 (Jul/Aug 1955). The text was typeset in copy blocks, scant word balloons used dialogue not repeated in the text, there were no ruled borders.

This effort was followed by a six-page story called "Born Failure" published in *Adventures Into the Unknown* #160, dated Oct/Nov 1965. Here was a story where the artist finally got his chance at illustrating science fiction, complete with space travel, rocketry and aliens. This story and the previous one were both credited to Johnny Craig on the first page of each story. However, John's next story, "The Treasure of Bad Luck Point" from *Unknown Worlds* #47 (dated Apr/May 1966), was credited to an artist named "Jay Taycee." As a buyer of this comic off the newsstands in 1965, this author remembers being perplexed over the credits on this story. At the time, comic collectors were asking who "Jay Taycee" was and why did he draw just like Johnny Craig? In his 1969 *Squa Tront* interview, John explained: "At the time, the firm which employed me didn't want me to be doing illustration for any of the other agencies and studios in the local area here in Pennsylvania and, though it didn't really apply to work done for firms in New York, I tried to honor their request anyway. I merely used the initials of my name, John Thomas Alexis Craig, and formed J.T.A.C., Jay Taycee."

If anything, the ACG stories only served as a warm up for John. In March of 1966, Jim Warren's *Eerie* #2 magazine hit the newsstands. Inside was one of the most beautifully rendered "Jay Taycee" masterpieces ever published; a six-page horror story called "Eye of the Beholder" with a splash page rendered in ink wash and looking like it had just stepped right out of an EC Picto-Fiction magazine from 1956. It was an incredible effort and to top it off the last page of the story, and the climax panel itself, depicted a classic EC-type Johnny Craig ending. Over the next two years John would provide eleven more horror stories for both *Eerie* and *Creepy* magazines, all of which were written by John as well. For a while it was just like the old EC days all over again. EC fans couldn't have been happier with Warren's black and white magazines as the publisher pulled

together other such talented EC stars as Reed Crandall, Jack Davis, George Evans, Frank Frazetta, Joe Orlando, John Severin, Al Williamson and Wally Wood. It was the best of times for EC Fan-Addicts and comic lovers all across the country.

In 1967 Johnny Craig penciled an issue of Batman & Hawkman for DC's *Brave and Bold* #70, and in 1968 began doing free-lance work for Marvel Comics. He started out inking Gene Colan's pencils on the *Iron Man & Sub-Mariner* one-shot dated April 1968, then was immediately put to work inking the new *Iron Man* comic which debuted in May. Beginning with *Iron Man* #2, John took over both pencils and inks on this title, which he continued through issue #4. After that he became the primary inker until issue #28. He also did some inking on the *Sub-Mariner* comic and contributed to various other Marvel titles as well.

WITH THIS SHIVERING SHOCKER, WE INJECT A LITTLE LOVE INTEREST INTO THE PULSATING PROCEEDINGS... ALL ABOUT A MAN WHO COULDN'T STAND LOSING HIS BEAUTIFUL WIFE . . . OF COURSE, AS THE SAYING GOES, BEAUTY IS ALL IN THE . . .
EYE of the BEHOLDER!
WHY? WHY DID IT HAVE TO HAPPEN TO EVE? SHE WAS LOVELY.. WONDERFUL...EVERYTHING TO ME! WHY HER? WHY?
GERALD, PLEASE! THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO NOW!
IT'S NOT FAIR! I DON'T WANT TO LOSE HER! EVE IS TOO VIBRANT... TOO WARM A PERSON TO BE...DEAD! I WON'T ACCEPT IT!
GERALD, I'M YOUR FRIEND AND YOUR DOCTOR ... EVERYTHING WAS DONE TO SAVE YOUR WIFE! EVERYTHING WITHIN THE REALM OF MEDICINE AND SCIENCE!
MEDICINE AND SCIENCE FAILED, HOWARD! BUT I WON'T LET THIS BE THE END! THERE ARE THINGS BEYOND THAT REALM... ANY REALM ...I'LL FIND THEM... THEY WON'T FAIL!
ART BY JAY TAYCEE, SCRIPT BY ARCHIE GOODWIN

"Eye of the Beholder," from **Eerie** #2 (Mar 1966, magazine format), is Craig's first story for Warren Publishing Company and under the name of Jay Taycee. Not since EC's Picto-Fiction magazines during the mid-1950s had Johnny had the chance to use such a variety of elements and style in his work.

"Please Call Me Johnny"

by Bill Leach

The world has lost another great artist. It saddens me deeply to write about the passing of such a kind and talented man. "Mr. Craig," as I called him in the beginning, died of heart failure on September 13. It came as a sudden shock to everyone. Johnny had undergone heart surgery a few years earlier, but he had been feeling great and was working quite a bit on a variety of commissions for his fans. I was one of those lucky fans. In all, he created four nice paintings for me. These were all used as covers for the EC zine *Horror From the Crypt of Fear*.

When I took over editing and publishing the EC zine I was fortunate enough to make a connection with Craig. He had been working for the previous publisher, Sam Kingston. Johnny agreed to an initial painting and then another. About the time I requested the fourth painting is when he had heart surgery. He said he would let me know when he was ready to paint again. Sure enough, within a year Johnny contacted me with a full head of steam. He seemed very excited to start a new painting and agreed to work on a larger canvas. He was particularly pleased with the final piece. He claimed it to be one of the most detailed paintings he had ever created and took the time to photograph himself with the canvas before sending it to me.

My earlier efforts working with Craig were simple. I would tell him what I wanted and he would draw a couple of images. With the cover painting for issue #10, I drew up a sketch to show him what I wanted. He never sent any preliminary drawings—just the finished painting.

This time was different. In the beginning I had asked to be part of the painting. I wanted to be a zombie coming out of the cauldron. But after I saw

what a major character the zombie had become, I asked Johnny to replace my likeness with a monster or a demon. In the final painting you can see my severed head resting quietly on a platter between the Vault-Keeper's hands and the demon.

Johnny created some wonderful preliminary images for this painting. I am still partial to the "bird's eye view" on a couple of them, and still wonder WHY DIDN'T I HAVE HIM PAINT THAT ONE?! It was a real tough job—trying to pick just ONE image to have painted. It would have been easier if some of the drawings were mediocre...but they were all GREAT! I'm not sure how I finally came up with the final choice (it is actually a combination of two of the sketches). If I had been given a second chance, I probably would have changed my mind again!

It's like Grant Geissman said, "I always thought there would be another Craig painting." I guess I must have felt the same way. I was already conjuring up ideas for future paintings. Johnny seemed up for the task. I had sent him a lot of reference material and the plan was to put the GhouLunatics and Drusilla into a variety of scenes and situations—to explore the mysterious environment of The Old Witch, The Crypt-Keeper, The Vault-Keeper and his silent sidekick Drusilla.

We were working on the cover for issue #12, when Craig passed away. This was going to be a much larger, more involved painting than previous commissions. The 24" x 36" canvas would feature the GhouLunatics and Drusilla in a torture chamber. I had sent Johnny images of torture devices, which he was incorporating into the layout. The characters were enjoying my execution (remember my decapitated head in the previous painting). Bill Gaines was included as the hooded axe man and Johnny Craig would appear as an artisan capturing this "head-toppling" moment. The painting didn't get past the preliminary pencil stage and it was the last thing that Johnny ever worked on.

Johnny Craig was a great artist up until his last day on earth. He never lost his touch. He never lost his vision or his integrity. My fondest recollection came after years of referring to him as "Mr. Craig." In a letter he wrote, "I think it's also time to stop addressing me as "Mr." Please call me "Johnny." And I did.

During the early 1970s he decided he'd done enough comic book work and went into semi-retirement. By this time, he had already received his first request from an EC fan to create a painting of the Vault-Keeper. He had completed a Vault-Keeper oil portrait for Bill Gaines in 1954. This masterpiece hung on Bill Gaines' wall in his office until his death in 1992. The painting was eventually published on the cover of the EC fanzine *Squa Tront* #5 in 1974. The back cover of this same fanzine features Johnny's first commissioned Vault-Keeper painting. Back-to-back Craig paintings make this fanzine a true collector's item among EC fan-addicts today.

John enjoyed doing these types of paintings very much as he was now able to work at his own pace. No deadlines here. He was very meticulous about the commissions he turned out, sometimes producing as many as half a dozen

[continued on page 80]

WELCOME BACK, TRUTH-SEEKER! OL' DIGGER'S BEEN WAITING HERE--JUST FOR YOU!
AND, WHILE I WAS WAITING, I DUG UP A LITTLE STORY TO ENTERTAIN YOU! YOU WILL STAY AND LISTEN TO IT, WON'T YOU?
AFTER ALL, IT'S SO SELDOM THAT I GET ANY VISITORS HERE! LOTS OF PERMANENT RESIDENTS...BUT NO VISITORS!
SO, JUST SETTLE BACK ON THAT SARCOPHAGUS THERE AND RELAX...AND I'LL TELL YOU A RATHER AMUSING TALE I HEARD THE OTHER DAY FROM A TRAVELING TOMBSTONE SALESMAN...
I CALL THIS LITTLE JEWEL--
FROM BEYOND THE BRINK!
STAN LEE EDITOR
JOHNNY CRAIG WRITER AND ARTIST
ARTIE SIMEK LETTERER
TM & MARVEL CHARACTERS

In September 1969 Johnny's horror story titled "From Beyond the Brink!" debuted in Marvel's **Tower of Shadows** #1 comic, where he was once again afforded the chance to draw a horror host introducing the story.

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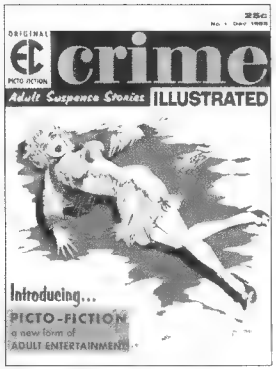
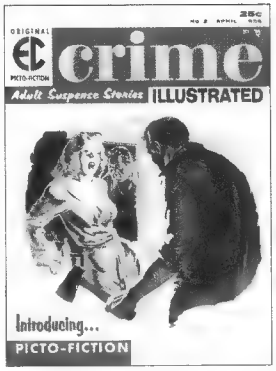
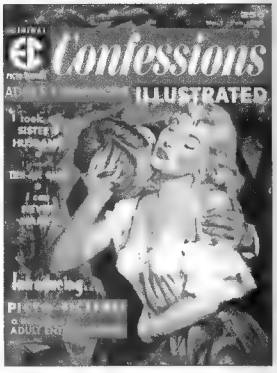
JOHNNY CRAIG'S PICTO-FICTION

by Paul Wardle







For those who've never seen them, EC's "Picto-Fiction" magazines were a treasure trove of beautiful artwork. Containing many of the same artists as the new trend color comics, these black and white magazines, *Terror Illustrated*, *Crime Illustrated*, *Shock Illustrated* and *Confessions Illustrated*, used blocks of text with black and white illustrations, leaving room for larger drawings, sometimes in two-tone black and blue or black and red. The stories ran 10 or 12 pages, much longer than EC's previous five- to seven-page stories in the "New Direction" comics or the six- to eight-pagers of the "New Trend." Also, there were five stories per issue instead of four. Sadly, three of these magazines ran only two issues each with a third issue of *Shock* receiving extremely limited distribution. There even exists unpublished art pages for planned future issues, including a Frazetta story.

Since we are paying tribute to Johnny Craig, I could not let the occasion go by without mentioning that Craig's work in the Picto-Fiction books is some of the best of his career. Okay, admittedly, once you've seen Craig's depiction of the grinning, wild-eyed, drooling Vault-Keeper, no one else's version will do. Along with Ingels' Old Witch and Davis' Crypt-Keeper, Craig's VK is the definitive version.

But there were no GhouLunatics hosting the stories in Picto-Fiction, not even in *Terror Illustrated*. However, with the new larger format, slicker design and lack of word balloons superimposed on the art, the artists had freedom to experiment with other media, utilizing charcoal and pencil effects that would have been lost in the four-color process of the New Trend. In these black and white mags, you'll see scratchboard techniques and softer shading of backgrounds. The results vary. Ingels and Evans fared better in the color comics, but Craig's work showed hitherto unknown depth and dimension.

His panels in "The Gorilla's Paw" (*Terror Illustrated* #1) shone out like a beacon. The story is an updating of the classic literary short story "The Monkey's Paw," but in this modernized version written by Al Feldstein, the paw itself crawls along the ground, returning all bloodied, in response to half-remembered wishes, like a scene out of a twisted old Peter Lorre movie. And the creepy, buck-toothed proprietor of the curio shop where the paw is purchased is pure Craig, a homely, bespectacled wretch that almost resembles Jerry Lewis in *The Nutty Professor*.

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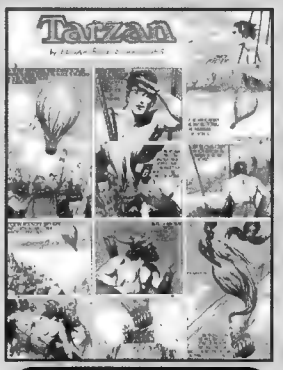
Comic Book Art
Jack Kirby's pencil re-creation of *Amazing Fantasy #15.*

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Comic Strip Art
1942 Tarzan Sunday page hand-colored by Burne Hogarth.

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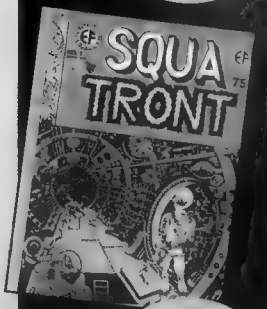

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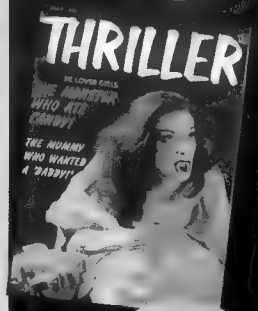

monster mags

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"Passion Made Me A Thief" in *Confessions Illustrated* #1 is filled with masterful charcoal renderings of a man and woman, with only occasional returns to Craig's well-known pen and ink style. This suggests that Craig was enjoying the chance to expand his illustrator horizons.

Some mixed-media panels blend different techniques in a coherent whole. The scratchboard male in the foreground and line-drawn female in the background of page 49 (the fifth page of the Craig story) goes beyond cinematic. Craig even seems to use movie star George Sanders as a model on the second to last page.

"Pieces Of Hate" in the second and last issue of *Crime Illustrated* begins with a stunning splash page that could have been executed with soft pencils or charcoal pencils. A man holds an axe in the foreground, hiding it behind his back while his smiling, rotund wife seems unaware that he plans to kill her. Other panels are meticulously crosshatched, which, owing to Craig's notorious slowness in finishing his stories, must have cost precious days, because the second half of the story cuts corners and simplifies the layouts into more consistent, tonal line work.

Though Johnny Craig often wrote and edited the stories he drew for *Vault of Horror* and *Crime SuspenStories*, his Picto-Fiction work seems to be on stories written by Al Feldstein (sometimes using his pseudonym of Alfred E. Neuman, before that name would become famous as *MAD*'s mascot) or others.

I spoke to Craig briefly on the phone a few years ago, inquiring if he would like to do an interview, a proposed cover story for another magazine. He politely declined. I would like to have asked him about his work on Marvel's *Iron-Man* or *Tower of Shadows*. His stunning Picto-Fiction inspired tales for Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie* (sometimes under pseudonym Jay Taycee), and of course his legendary *Vault of Horror* and *Crime SuspenStories*, but it was not meant to be. His reply was immovable. "Everything I had to say about EC I've said. No thanks."

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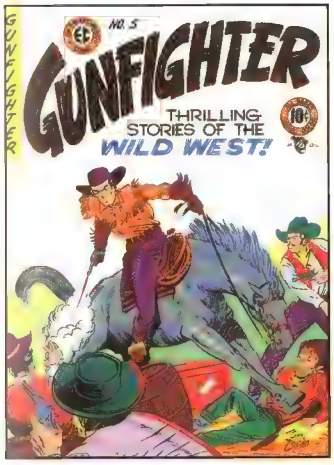
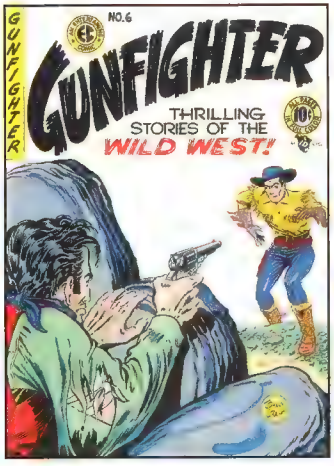
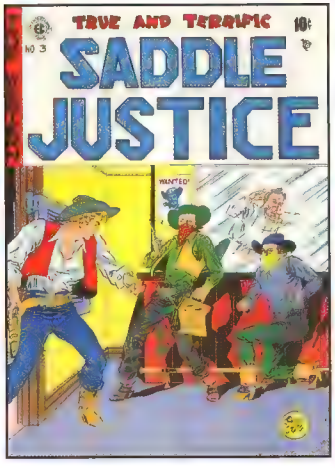
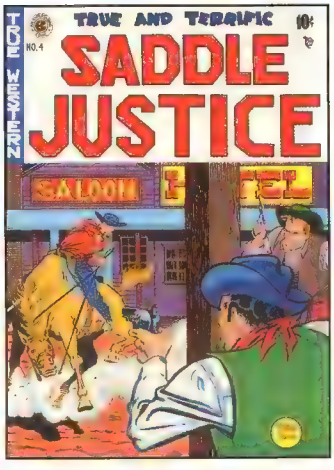
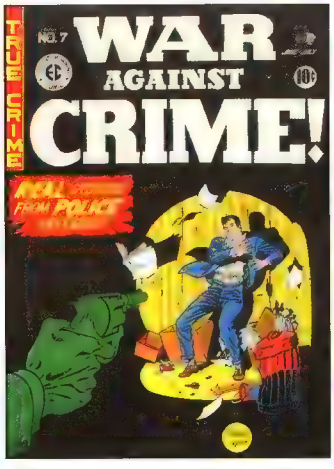
COLOR GALLERY











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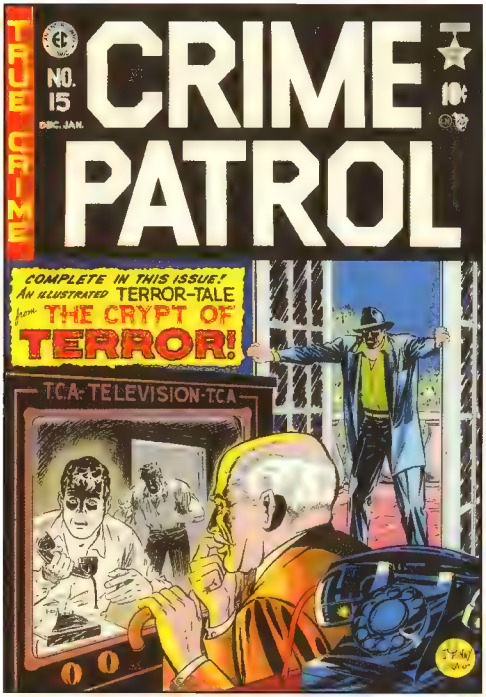

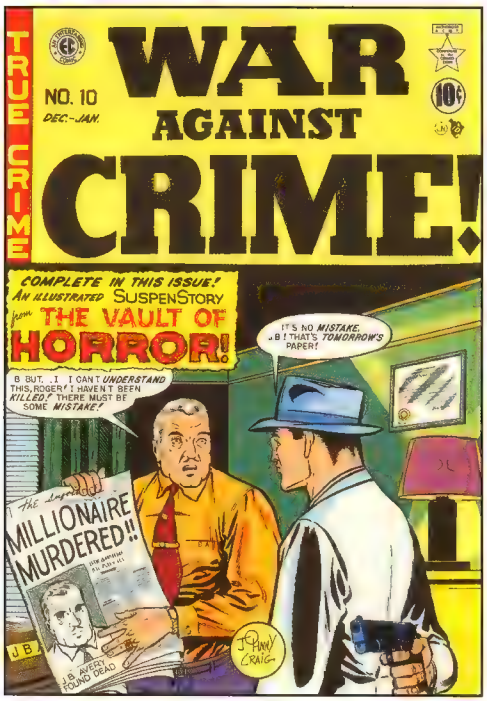

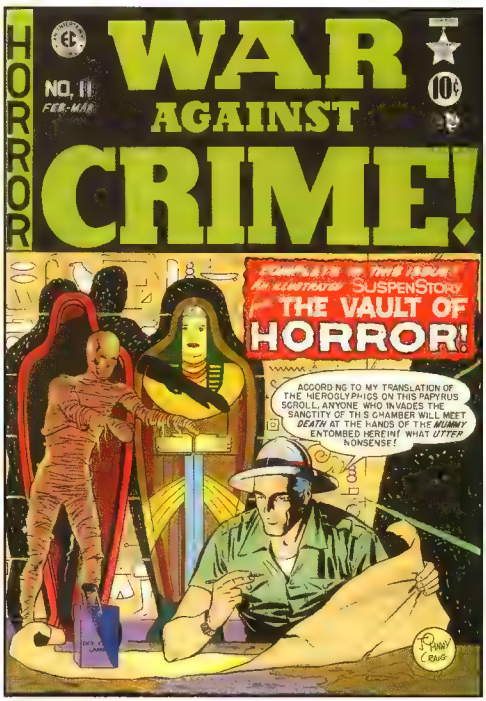
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JOHNNY CRAIG

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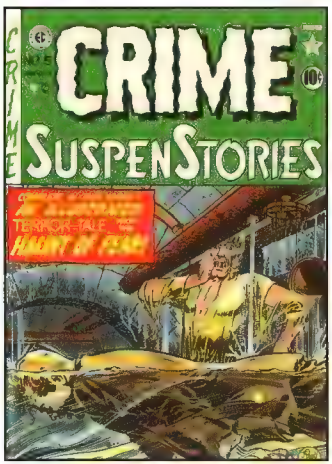

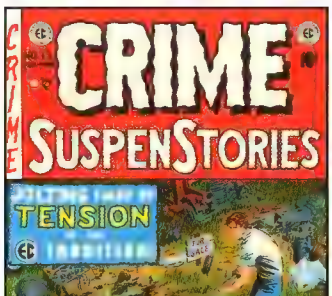

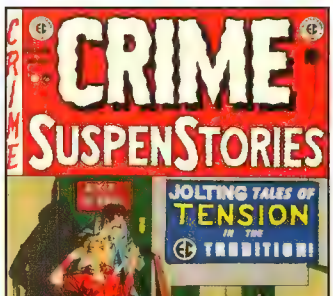

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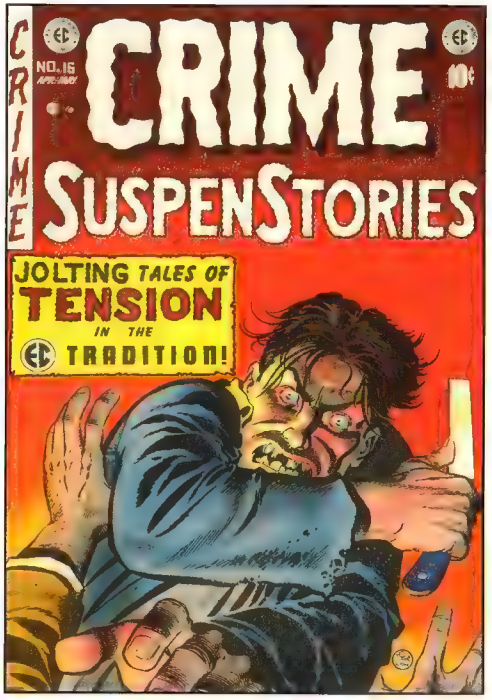
CRIME SUSPENSTORIES
FEATURING A NEW TREND IN MAGAZINES...
STARTLING TALES OF TENSION!
THIS IS THE DOLL YOU'RE PAYING ME TO KILL ? WHY THIS ... THIS IS A PICTURE OF YOU !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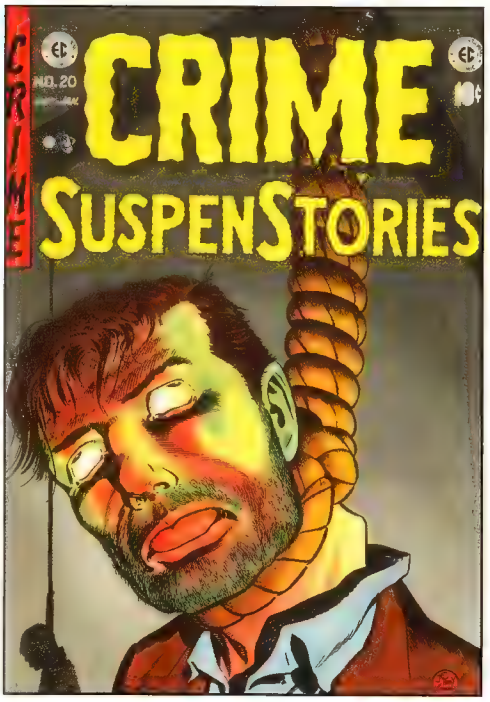
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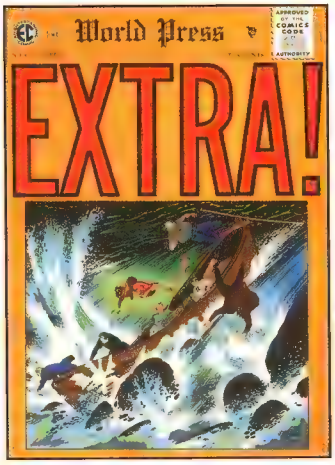

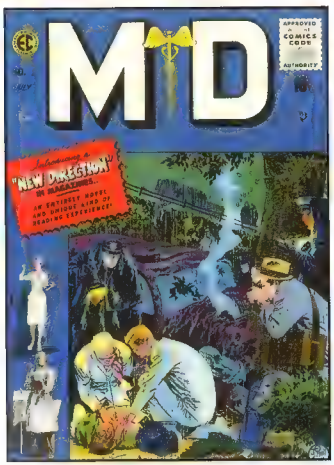

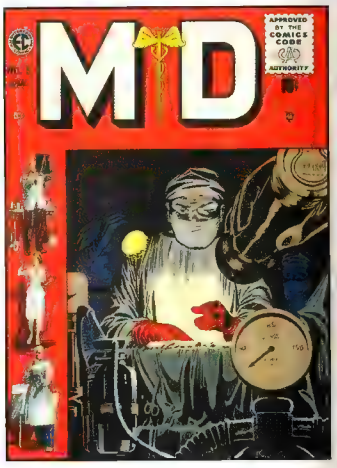

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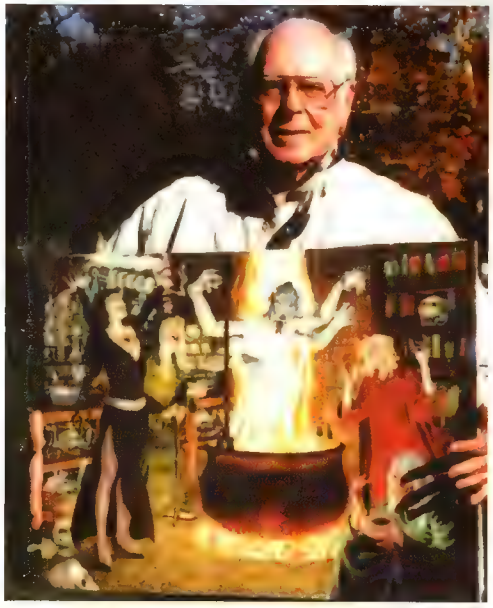
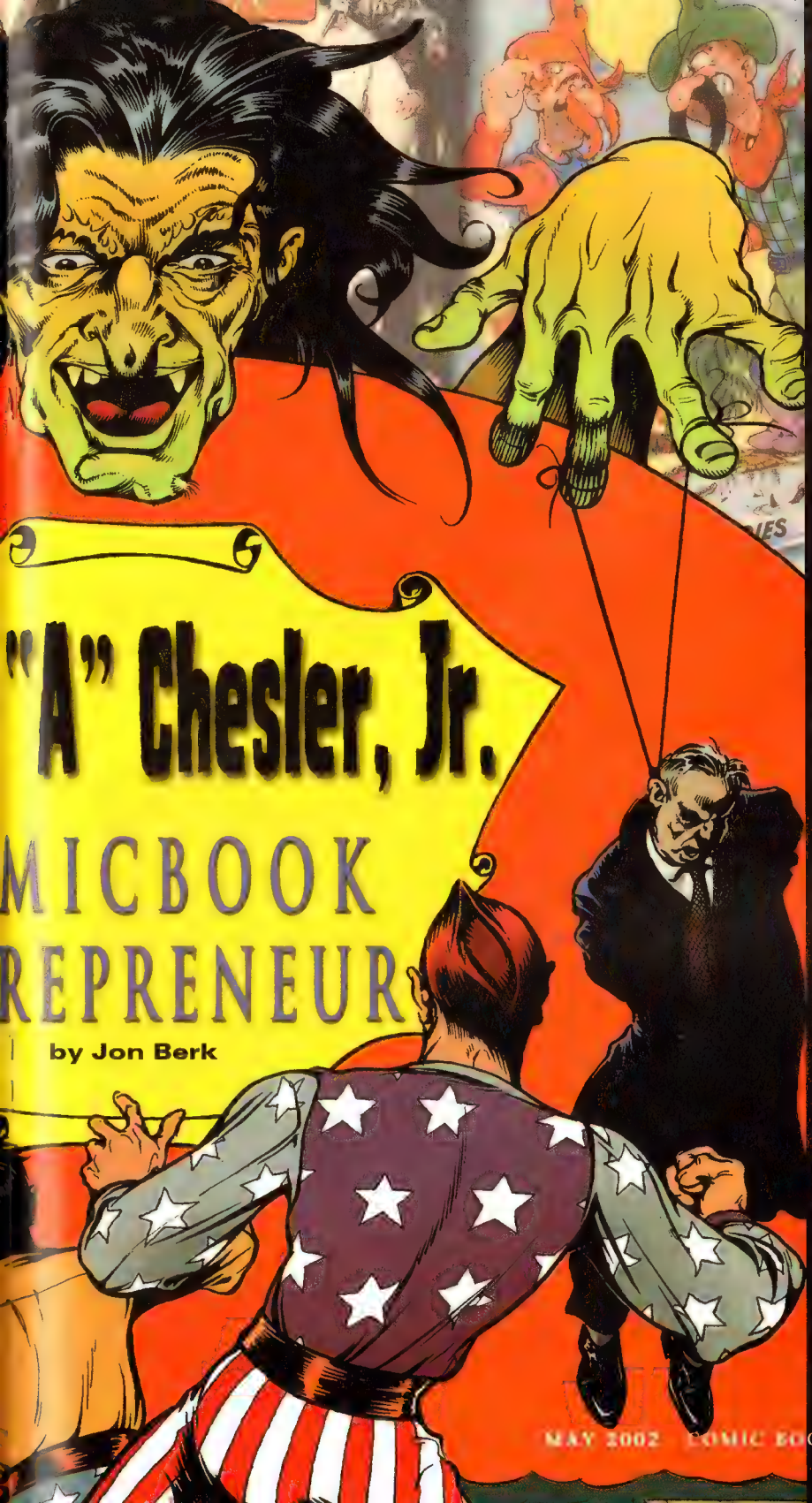


Far upper left, cover painting for **Horror From the Crypt of Fear** #10. Far lower left, cover painting for **Horror From the Crypt of Fear** #9. Left, Johnny Craig holding his painting for **Horror From the Crypt of Fear** #11, shown in full below.

COMICS
DYNAMIC
COMICS
NO. 9
10¢
Harry



The Rise of Original Comicbook Material

From 1934 to 1936, the "modern" comicbook was beginning to gain steam and popularity as titles such as *Famous Funnies, Tip Top Comics, King Comics, Popular Comics* and *The Funnies* filled the newsstand. These titles reprinted some of the most popular newspaper comic strips of the day. However, in 1935 a new phenomenon appeared in comicbooks. Due to the lack of available reprint material and the costs for the rights to same, some titles were printing "new," original material. In February 1935 National Periodical/DC produced ***New Fun*** and in December 1935 released ***New Comics***.

Cover dated May 1936, Comic Magazine Co. produced *Comic Magazine/Funny Pages* with material that was originally slated for National Periodicals. This company was owned by National Periodical defectors William Cook (former managing editor) and John Mahon (former business manager). (It is thought that they were "paid" with this art by their cash strapped ex-employer, Major Wheeler-Nicholson. *Comic Magazine* #1 contains a "Dr. Mystic" story by Siegel and Schuster, which is key in the development of Superman. However, that is a story for another day.) They also produced *Funny Picture Stories* (November 1936), and the short-lived titles of *Detective Picture Stories* (December 1936—it beat *Detective Comics* 1 March 1937 to the stands) and *Western Picture Stories* (February 1937—tying with *Star Ranger* as the first western comic). Comic Magazine Co. published all these books in the period of November 1936 to June 1937. They sold their extant titles, *Funny Pages* and *Funny Picture Stories*, to I.W. Ullman and Frank Temerson who published these titles for a short time—September 1937 to January 1938—as Ultem Publishers before the line was taken

A Rapid View of Fun that's New
CHEERIO
GEARED TO THE TEMPO OF MODERN AMERICA
10c
January 5, 1936
No. 1
MAGAZINE SECTION
STORIES: MY FRIEND MAGRUDER . . . DOUBLE JEOPARDY . . . THE WATER CLOCK . . . STRIKE THREE!
COMICS: "LUCKY" COYNE . . . SHOW BOAT . . . KING KOLES' KOURT . . . CHEERIO HOTEL

This magazine was filed for copyright purposes in September 1935. Although not published, many of the elements of the magazine were used in Chesler comicbooks when published in 1937.

over by Joe Hardie and Centaur Publications in March 1938.

Rounding out original comicbook titles on the stands in 1936, John Henle published four issues of a poorly produced book called *Wow What a Magazine*. The four issues of this book contain the earliest works of Will Eisner, Sam Iger, Bob "The Batman" Kane, Bernard Bailey (who was to be the artist for "The Spectre" and "The Hourman" and briefly ran a small shop in the 1940s producing titles such as *Top Spot Comics* and *Triple*

Star Comics #1 (Feb 1937) Published at the same time as Star Ranger #1, this book was the first published by Chesler. Drawn by J. C. Brigham.

Star Ranger #1 (Feb 1937) Drawn by William Allison, this book ties with Western Picture Stories (as produced by Comic Magazine Co.) as the first western comicbook.

Threat Comics), Dick Briefer (who would go on to receive notoriety for his rendition of "Frankenstein" in *Prize Comics*), George Brenner (creator of "The Clock," the first masked hero in comicbooks) and Louis Ferstadt (who would go on to draw "The Flash," "Starman" and "Green Lantern" and eventually be the art director for Fox Comics in the late 1940s).

Eisner realized early on that there was a future in the production of comicbook features for publishers looking to cash in on the nascent comicbook industry. He, along with a few other individuals, recognized a market for supplying ready-to-be-published mate-

Star Comics #4 (Jun 1937) Drawn by Winsor McCay, Jr., the stylized art is reminiscent of his father's unique style.

Yankee Comics #4 (Mar 1942) Beautifully rendered, this was the last of the brief production of pre-war Chesler Publications.

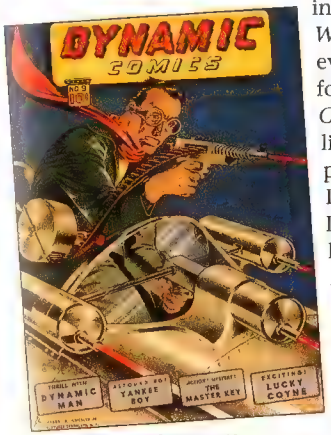
Yankee Comics #1 (Sep 1941) Chesler joins the super-hero parade with his first published foray into the genre. Lasting only four issues the book continued sporadically as a pocket-size publication during the war years. Drawn by Charles Sultan.

Centaur. The core Funnies, Inc. artists—Bill Everett, Carl Burgos, Paul Gustavson and others—packaged a comicbook including features of the "Sub-Mariner" and "Human Torch" for Martin Goodman in a title known as *Marvel/Marvel Mystery Comics*. They soon supplied further material for Timely Publications and other comicbook companies that sprung up in the wake of the "super-hero" success of "Superman" and "Batman." Funnies, Inc. also produced early material for Novelty

Dynamic Comics 1 (Oct 1941) Drawn by Charles Sultan, "Major Victory" outranked many of his patriotic competitors of the day.

rial for companies who had neither the skill or expertise in the production of a comicbook.

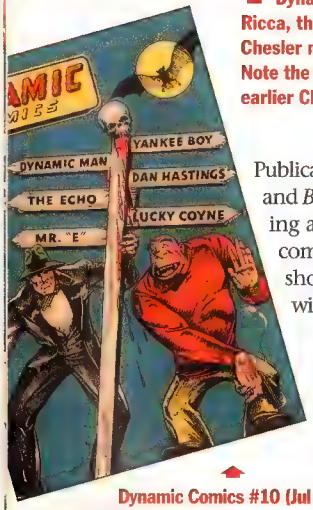
Rather than viewing comicbook production and creation as a stepping-stone to the more recognized prestige of newspaper comic strips, Eisner saw the creative and financial potential in this new entertainment medium. Eisner formed with Sam Iger an early "comic shop" that produced material for release in England for titles such as *Wags*. These features were eventually reproduced to form the basis of *Jumbo Comics* and the Fiction House line of comics. Eisner also produced material for Fox Publications and Quality Publications under the publishing eye of Everett "Busy" Arnold.



Dynamic Comics #9 Even Mac Raboy contributed a cover to this series.

Lloyd Jacquet, who had been the editor of *New Fun* #1, joined Eisner as a comicbook packager. Jacquet formed Funnies, Inc., which was responsible for providing much early material for the super-hero line of books for

Dynamic Comics #8 As rendered by Gus Ricca, this may be the most desired of the Chesler macabre covers of the war years. Note the contents were reprinted from earlier Chesler comics.



Dynamic Comics #10 (Jul 1944) Blood dripping from the signpost, Gus Ricca rendered another foreboding cover.

Dynamic Comics #11 (Sep 1944) A mad scientist as rendered by Gus Ricca.

ubiquitous presence from the earliest days of comics to the waning years of the golden age in the late 1940s. Publisher, editor or "sweat shop" task master, Chesler literally left his "imprint" on many titles of this era. (Chesler books starting in 1941 proclaimed on every cover: "Harry 'A' Chesler, Jr. World's Greatest Comics." Move over Stan Lee!) Chesler aggressively marketed and sought to package comicbook material for his own titles as well as providing art and writing services to the growing cadre of would be comicbook publishers. His stable of writers and artists provided a finished product with assembly line efficiency.

Cover dated February 1937, Chesler produced and published *Star Comics* and *Star Ranger*. These titles contained

Dynamic Comics #20 Fran Smith delivers an apocalyptic cover. Note the bare-breasted female in the foreground

Publications titles such as *Target Comics* and *Blue Bolt Comics*. Publishers, looking at the growing phenomenon of comicbooks, turned to "comicbook shops" as sources to provide them with ready material to be published.

Enter Harry "A" Chesler, Jr.

One of the earliest pioneers of comicbook shops—if not the first comicbook shop—was Harry "A" Chesler, Jr. (The "A" was claimed by Chesler to stand for "Anything.") His name and handiwork was an

Red Seal Comics #14 Although number 14, this was the first issue of this title which featured the "Black Dwarf." Cover is by Fran Smith.

all original material. As noted above, the marketplace had few such titles at this time. As indicated below, many creative talents—who were seeking a start in the world of "funny books"—were gobbled up by Chesler to turn out features for these titles and other publishers.

Although mostly remembered for the books he published in the early and mid 1940s, the Chesler comicbook titles may be broken down into three periods. In the early period of 1937-1939, he produced "funny books" that focused more on humor strips, adventure and western stories. In the pre-war years he joined the super-hero parade with titles such as *Dynamic Comics*, *Yankee Comics*, *Scoop Comics* and *Punch Comics*, which were short-lived in their first incarnation. The final period was the resurrection of these titles that sported the uniquely macabre covers of Gus Ricca as well as covers drawn by Fran Smith and George Tuska. The Chesler string of comic titles ran out as 1947 drew to a close.

The Pre-Superhero Period 1937-1939

Although the first published Chesler comicbooks were *Star Comics* and *Star Ranger* cover dated February 1937, it was obvious that Chesler had his eye on the publishing market and comics before this. In a little known mock-up magazine that was only submitted for copyright purposes, Chesler produced a magazine called *Cheerio* with a subtitle of "A Rapid View of Fun that's New." (There is that "new" word again.) Cover dated January 5, 1936 (registered September 19, 1935), it approximated the size of *New Fun*. The insides were mainly text (Chesler himself even penned a crime piece) along with single panel gags and blank filler pages.

Dynamic Comics #18 For pure weirdness, this tops the Ricca covers of the period

Cheerio could easily be relegated to the pile of esoterica that litters the history of comicbooks. However, the link of this magazine to *Star Comics* is inescapable. Header figure within *Cheerio* is a figure that became the cover figure

Dynamic Comics #12 Is this cigar-chomping protagonist a caricature of Harry Chesler himself?

Punch Comics #12 Desirable "skull" cover by Gus Ricca

for *Star Comics* #1 as drawn by J.C. Brigham. The tagline for this magazine became the tagline for *Star Comics* starting with the second issue. The full-page comic splash on the back cover of *Cheerio* was reproduced in *Star Comics* #1. Also, although it did not appear within, the magazine on the cover references the features of "King Kole's Court" and "Lucky Coyne" which were early features of *Star Comics*. As produced, *Star Comics* contained many one- and two-page features. One was named "Cheerio

Punch Comics #9 (Jul 1944). Gus Ricca characters come to "life" and give the artist "death" in another gore galore cover. For the time period, Ricca was years ahead of the horror era that would flourish in the early 1950s.

Punch Comics #1 (Dec 1941) As with Scoop #2, Charles Sultan was obviously "influenced" by Lou Fine. In this case, compare Fine's Fantastic Comics #5 as drawn for Fox Publications.

Minstrels" which, when viewed in the context of the above, has an obvious link to Chesler's plans for features.

The first six issues of *Star Comics* and *Star Ranger* were oversized. Every issue for each title was beautifully rendered. The material within consisting of

Punch Comics #19 Fran Smith delivers a gore galore cover typical of this period of Chesler books.

one- or two-page gags, adventure or western stories were well drawn and well produced. Talents such as Jack Cole, Charles Biro, Bob Wood, Fred Guardineer, Gill Fox, Fred Schwab, Ken Ernst, Otto and Jack Binder (who was an art editor for Chesler before he set up his own comic art shop), William Allison, Creig Flessel, Paul Gustavson and many others first cut their teeth here before moving on to other shops or in-house production for comicbook companies. The artists and writers were, for the most part, extremely young and neophytes to this new industry. The Chesler shop was their first stop in their comicbook career.

Star Comics contained the adventure strip "Dan Hastings" as first drawn by Clem Gretter (who had provided material

Scoop Comics #1 (Nov 1941) Charles Sultan recycled a cover concept used earlier by Fred Schwab for Star Ranger #2

for *New Fun*) and then drawn by Fred Guardineer. In addition to the artists mentioned above, one could even find work by Rick "Buck Rogers" Yager. The son of Winsor McCay supplied a strip called "Impy." The highly stylized animal characters of Dick Ryan were omnipresent in the features of these titles. Ryan's features and covers (along with many other artists of the Chesler shop) continued even as the publisher imprint changed to Ultem Publications for

Punch Comics #20 Perhaps this explains where all the gore came from as depicted in Punch Comics #19. Infamous "bare breasted" cover by Fran Smith.

books cover dated October 1937 and then Centaur Publications for titles covered dated March 1938. Not credited in any published comicbook resource work is the fact that the first cover drawn by Gill Fox was for the first issue of Centaur's *Keen Detective Funnies* cover dated July 1938.)

Although the subsequent publisher of *Star* and *Star Ranger* was listed as Ultem Publishers, the Chesler name prominently remained in the masthead as editor for these two titles. At the same time, Ultem also took over the remaining Cook/Mahon titles of *Funny Pages* and *Funny Picture Stories*. (Confusion has been created in the collection of these "pre-Centaur" issues in that the indicia on the covers or indicia contained on the interior pages did not initially reflect the change of publishing control.) These titles also listed Chesler as the editor. The

Scoop Comics #8 After a lapse of years, this book reappears for a single issue with reprinted material. It probably continues as Snap Comics #9.

content of these titles, upon resumption of publication by Ultem, clearly took on the look of Chesler produced books not only in name but style and content. This look and content continued for many months even as the publishing and editorial reins changed to Centaur Publications and "Uncle" Joe Hardie for titles dated March 1938.

As Centaur entered the science fantasy field with *Amazing Mystery Funnies* (August 1938) and the super-hero field with *Amazing Man Comics* (September 1939) following the advent of "Superman," Centaur turned to the Jacquet's Funnies Inc. shop for its material. ("Amazing Man" has the distinction of being the first "super-hero" to debut in his own title.) This shop of artists and the characters they produced for Centaur laid the groundwork for the greater fame the artists would gain as the creators of many of the major features for Timely Publications in the fall of 1939.

Before leaving this phase of the Chesler production, it is appropriate to observe that Chesler always had the ambition to syndicate some of his strips in newspapers. Syndication submissions were made for "Dan Hastings" and other adventure strips. Dick Ryan reworked several of his *Star Comic* pages into a newspaper format for possible syndication.

Although this phase of Chesler production was to end as Centaur took over, Chesler was soon to return with a new line of comic titles as he jumped onto the super-hero bandwagon.

Pre-War Super-Hero Titles 1941-1942

Chesler continued to be busy as the 1930s drew to a close. Although not publishing his own books, he did produce and package stories for several publishers including several early titles for MLJ before MLJ took its production in house. Chesler also packaged or contributed material for early issues of Fawcett titles such as *Master, Slam Bang* and *Capt. Marvel Comics*. Material was even produced for the earliest issues of Timely's *Mystic Comics*. Chesler also

Scoop Comics #2 (Jan 1942) As drawn by Charles Sultan, this cover owes an obvious debt to the cover of Hit #5 as drawn by Lou Fine.

produced a beautifully rendered premium give-away, *Cocomalt Big Book of Comics*.

Chesler entered the super-hero sweepstakes with four of his own titles: *Yankee Comics* (September 1941), *Dynamic Comics* (October 1941), *Scoop Comics* (November 1941) and *Punch Comics* (December 1941). Never one for understatement, each of his titles proclaimed they were "World's Greatest Comics." A new string of artists lead by Charles Sultan and George Tuska contributed material. Material from his earlier pre-hero titles was reproduced. (Reprinting of these earlier filler materials for his current line of titles was a common Chesler practice.) Even cover "concepts" were recycled. (Compare the cover of *Scoop Comics* #1 with *Star Ranger* #2 for derivative concept).

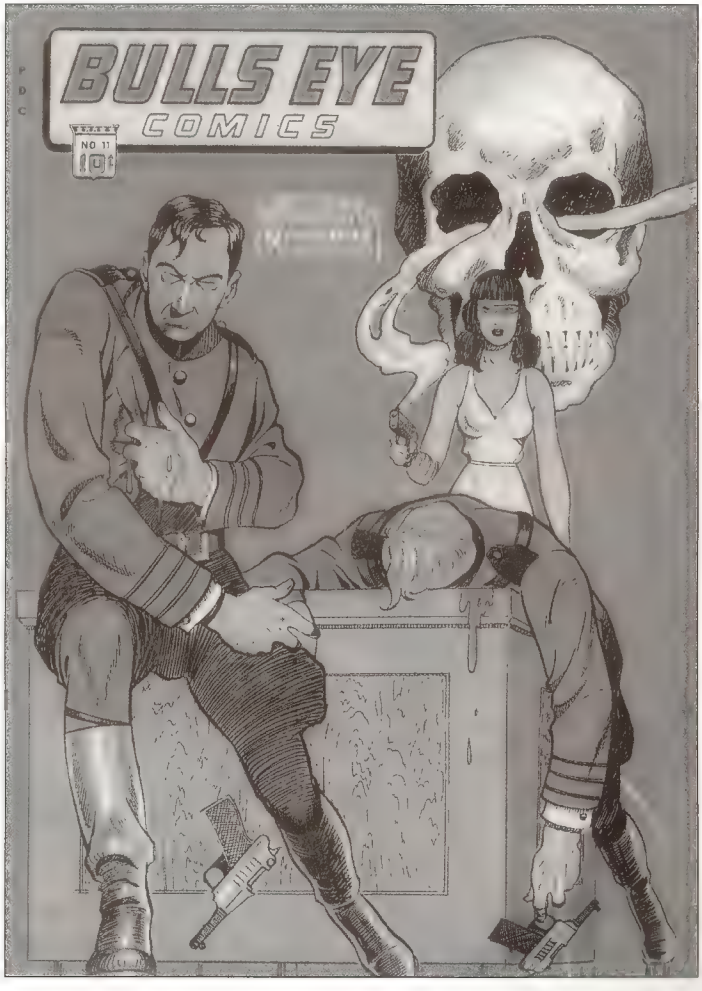
Sultan, as Chesler's art director, produced several wonderful covers and interior art which, by drawing style and content, were clearly influenced by master comic-book illustrator Lou Fine. One need go no farther than the cover of *Scoop* #2, which is clearly a derivative of the cover of *Hit Comics* #5 which Fine drew. (Also compare *Punch Comics* #1 with Fine's cover for *Fantastic Comics* #5.) Sultan was not the first or last artist to imitate or be influenced by the incomparable Lou Fine. Imitation or not, Sultan rendered beautifully drawn art for characters such as "Master Key," "Yankee Doodle," "Dynamic Man" and "Major Victory."

George Tuska contributed art for the mysterious "Lady Satan." Tuska is presently better known for his silver age art for the pantheon of Marvel Comic characters including "Iron Man" and "The Avengers." Tuska's association with comics stretches back to the earliest days of the golden age of comics. He not only drew for Chesler, but also did much work for the Eisner shop as it produced material for Fox Publications and Fiction House. His art also graces the early adventures of Capt. Marvel. One only has to view his work on the "Shark Brodie" strip he drew for Fiction House to observe his graceful and fine line work. A true craftsman, Tuska often does not receive his due for the early contributions he made to the medium of comic-book art. A little known fact is that it was he, not Lou Fine, that drew the cover for *Mystery Men* #6.

Some titles continued characters from the Chesler pre-hero period such as "Dan Hastings" and "Lucky Coyne." However, the headliners were an array of new super-hero and adventure characters. The new lead features included:

Kayo Comics #12 Risque cover which predates the famous Marilyn Monroe scene in "The Seven Year Itch"

Master Key: Beginning in *Scoop Comics* #1, Master Key was a "Weird figure of the night, who strikes terror into the hearts of the most hardened criminal. Known to society as suave sophisticated Ray Cardell, this not-so-playful playboy represents the iron fist of justice. All the underworld trembles at his name." One night, rays blast through a telescope he is using. It has the effect upon his eye that allows him to look



Bulls Eye Comics 11 Drawn by George Tuska, this "Lady Satan" cover first appeared as the splash for the "Lady Satan" story in Dynamic Comics #2.

Unpublished original art "Black Dwarf" cover by Fran Smith, which was probably destined for a cover of Red Seal Comics.

through objects. (Compare the modified origin in *Punch Comics* #13 April 1945 wherein his power is gained by an explosion caused by a short circuit.) As his character continued in the mid 1940s, his eye could paralyze or burn people or objects. Donning fedora and cape he takes on criminals and fifth columnist galore.

Rocketman and Rocket Girl first appeared in *Scoop Comics* #1. They were Cal Martin and his fiancé Doris Dalton, young scientists who use his rocket pack invention to battle crime and better society. Later in the 1940s he makes a career switch and becomes an attorney and she his secretary. Nonetheless, they zoomed on until the Chesler string ran out in the late 1940s.

Yankee Doodle Jones and Dandy: First appearing in *Yankee Comics*, this pair literally was borne from the "members" of old war veterans. Jones is injected by an invincibility serum just as fifth columnists come and kill the scientist who has "created" this hero. The scientist's son, upon seeing his father killed, also injects himself with the serum. The two are literally called upon by Uncle Sam himself to battle the foes of freedom and the U.S.A. The feature reflected the vitality and verve of the early golden age with one-liners flying as fast as fists.

LADY SATAN
THERE SHE IS, GET HER!
I GOT HER! I GOT HER!
THAT TAKES CARE OF LADY SATAN!
I FOOLED THEM, THAT TIME. NOW TO LEARN IF HEINRICH WAS THAT LIST OF NAMES!
A SPECIAL DISPATCH, COLONEL HEINRICH!
GOOD, ORDERS FOR MORE EXECUTIONS.
I WAS BEHIND THE DOOR - YOUR MEN WERE WRONG COLONEL HEINRICH! AND NOW I'LL TAKE THAT LETTER!
DONNERWETTER! LADY SATAN! WHERE DID YOU COME FROM? B-BUT MY MEN SAID YOU WERE DEAD!
YOU'LL PAY WITH YOUR HEAD FOR THIS LADY SATAN!
NOW-INTO THAT CLOSET QUICKLY!

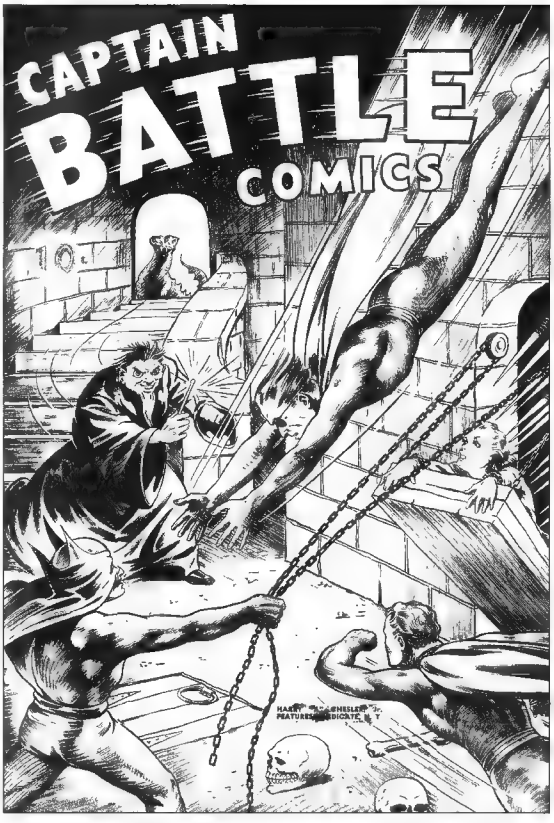
◄ This Lady Satan original art page may not have been published. Note, however, the detailed art by Charles Sultan which was obviously influenced by Lou Fine.

Lady Satan: Her fiancé and she are victims of a bombing while on a ship. As told in *Dynamic Comics* #2 (December 1941), the ship sunk and her fiancé died. She takes an oath to be the foe of the evil Germans. Donning a mask and waltzing about in an evening dress, somehow she manages to travel unnoticed through the streets of Nazi occupied France as she fights the German host.

Major Victory: First appearing in *Dynamic Comics* #1, Major Victory was one of many "patriotic" super-heroes that sprung up to defend America against foreign forces before the official entry into the war following Pearl Harbor. Near death due to a bomb blast while serving as an Army sentry, he is revived by the ringing of the liberty bell by "Father Patriot." Reincarnated as Major Victory (I guess he had rank over the host of "Captain" patriot super-heroes of the day), the Major takes on the ruthless Baron Von Krumm and his no good Nazi henchmen.

Original art from cover from Dynamic Comics #12 by Gus Ricca. Note the detail of the herringbone jacket. ►

Dynamic Man, who first appeared in *Dynamic Comics* #1, took more of a Torch-like road to superheroeing (at least initially). Dr. Moore creates an artificial man to combat the evil witchcraft of The Yellow Spot (yes, "The Yellow Spot"). The Spot can travel as a bat. The Spot is killing off or entrancing the minds of American scientists. He goes to the home of Dr. Moore who is creating an artificial man. During the creation process, the Yellow Spot tries to stop Moore. Stabbing Moore, Moore manages to throw the switch giving life to his Dynamic Man. Dynamic Man is able to stop the fiendish plan of the Yellow Spot and release the trapped minds of other scientists. Grabbing



Original art for Capt. Battle Comics #3 cover In this little known oddity, Chesler published an issue of the Lev Gleason character.

the bat form of the Yellow Spot, Dynamic Man proclaims: "The Yellow Spot is rubbed from the world." Later, he would become an actual human working as high school coach, Bert McQuade.

The Echo first appeared in *Yankee Comics* #1. A gifted ventriloquist he was fortunate to find an invisibility belt (and later a paralyzing ring) without which he would have had a difficult time fighting crime.

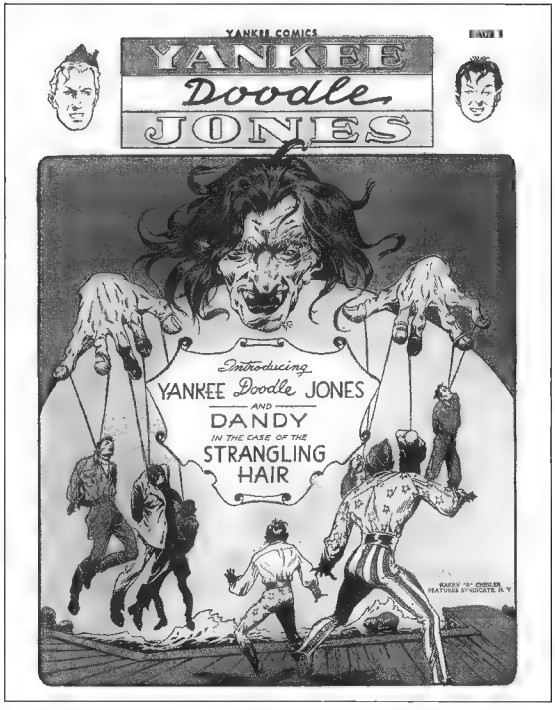
Notwithstanding the relatively good quality of the art and features, after only a few months, these titles abruptly ceased publication by February /March 1942. Although the hiatus might possibly be as a result of paper shortages brought on by the advent of the war (compare the demise of many Fox Publication titles and Centaur titles by those cover dated February and March 1942), it appears that the answer may be simpler—Chesler and his editor entered the armed forces! Although most Chesler titles did not resume a regular publication schedule until 1944, *Dynamic* made a two-issue resurrection later in 1942 or 1943. The indicia of *Dynamic* #8 and 9, after listing Chesler as publisher and Phil Sturm as editor states: "on leave from U.S. Army." (Compare a similar statement in the Statement of Ownership appearing in *Punch Comics* #14 July 1945). It may be that without Chesler rowing, his publishing syndicate stopped dead in the water.

Dynamic #8 contained material reprinted from the earlier Chesler titles of *Scoop* #1 ("Master Key"), *Yankee* #1 (when reprinted in *Dynamic Comics* #8, all of the "Yankee Doodle" art work was exactly the same; however, the splash page was slightly redrawn, possibly indicating that the original splash was lost) and *Star Comics* (e.g. the "Li'l Arthur" feature is from issue 5). No new material was within. However, the book sported a uniquely macabre cover by the new art director Gaspano "Gus" Ricca. The other interim issue—number 9—had a guns ablazin' cover by the soon to be renowned Mac Raboy.

Late Super-hero Period 1944-1947

As noted above, publication of Chesler imprint books abruptly ceased due to the advent of World War II. Many of the most sought after Chesler books are from

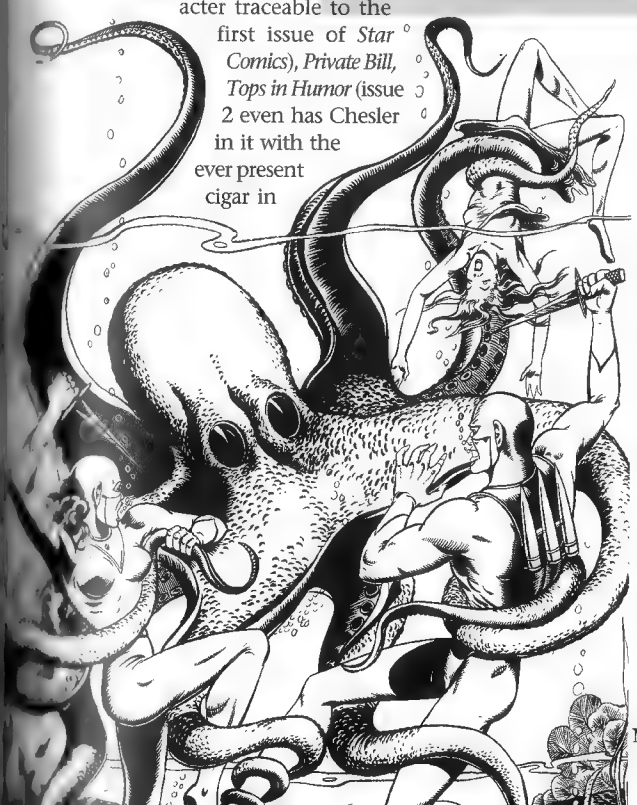
Splash page of "Yankee Doodle Jones" story from Yankee Comics #1. Compare this splash to the redrawn splash when the story was reprinted in Dynamic Comics #8 (see page 41).



the period when Chesler imprint comicbook production resumed on a regular basis in mid 1944. Artists for these titles included Gus Ricca, Fran Smith, George Tuska, Otto Eppers, Raphael Astarita, Paul Gattuso, Ruben Moreira and Charles Goodman. The titles resumed with many "gaps" in the numbering. A new title, *Red Seal Comics*, commenced with number 14.

Dynamic had ceased publication with the third issue (February 1942). The numbering for *Dynamic* resumed with number 8. *Punch Comics* had ceased with the second issue (February 1942) and resumed with issue 9 in July 1944. *Scoop Comics* ceased with the third issue (March 1942) and resumed with one single issue in 1945—issue number 8. *Yankee Comics* concluded with issue 4 (March 1942) and never resumed.

Before examining the post super-hero production, it is appropriate to propose an explanation for these gaps. Although apparently he and his editor were engaged in service to their country, Chesler actually continued to produce a number of pocket size comicbooks for Remington Morse Co. and William Wise Co. The new art director, Gus Ricca, had a hand in this production. It is not known how widely distributed these issues were. Note that one of these pocketsize titles was *Yankee Comics*. The numbering of presently known pocketsize issues of *Yankee Comics* is for issues 4 through 7. It may be reasonable to conclude that this explains the number 8 for the single issue of *Scoop Comics*. During this time, digest issues appeared for *Adventures of Riggin' Bill* (a character traceable to the first issue of *Star Comics*), *Private Bill*, *Tops in Humor* (issue 2 even has Chesler in it with the ever present cigar in his mouth), *Mirth of a Nation* and *You Chirped a Chinful*. The audience for these books was military service personnel. The idea for these digests may well have come to Chesler as a result of his contact with the armed services. The books had prices of five and ten cents.



Accordingly, the gaps in numbering may represent the issues of these digests that were produced in this period. The contents of these books were mainly single page gags of service life with patriotic text fillers. Some of the material was reprinted from the pre-hero period of 1937. The reprinting of old material was fairly common for the books that Chesler produced from 1944 onward.

As to the number 14 for the first issue of *Red Seal Comics*, a reasonable theory is that the numbering continued from *Scoop* #8 which changed to *Snap Comics* #9 which changed to *Komik Pages* #10 which changed to *Bullseye Comics* #11 which changed to *Kayo Comics* #12 (or could have continued from *Jest Comics* #10 and 11—another of Chesler's repackaging products of earlier material). As to "issue 13," the only suggestion can be that the single issue of *Carnival Comics* which continued the reprinting of 1930s material is the "missing link." Suggestions as to this point are welcome.

Once resurrected, the contents of Chesler titles took on a more mundane nature. Sure there was the continuation of super-hero characters such as Dynamic Man, Rocketman and the adventurers Master Key, The Echo and Lady Satan. However, the stories were far more pedestrian and lost that edge of vitality that characterized many of the pre-war stories. Of course, this was a problem that was not unique to Chesler, but also plagued the other publishers as the war wound down and the age of the super-hero was in decline.

However, the uniquely grotesque and surreal covers of Gus Ricca drive the "collectiblity" of the titles from this period. Skulls, murderous dwarfs, blood dripping from every signpost, the Ricca covers had a dark, macabre edge reeking of malevolence. One wonders whether the kingpin character playing chess on the cover of *Dynamic* #12 is nothing less that a caricature of Chesler (cigar and all) himself. What the titles lacked in content quality, Chesler made up in risqué and bizarre covers. Whether it is a skirt fluttering up in *Kayo Comics* or a bare-breasted woman such as depicted in *Punch* #20, or the bizarre covers of *Dynamic* #19 and 20 or *Punch* #19, Chesler apparently would do anything to sell a book. Although a humor cover was interspersed on occasion, there is no questioning the atmosphere that Chesler pushed to lure the reader to his books.

Chesler published three issues of a new title, *Spotlight Comics* (November 1944). This title headlined the "Black Dwarf." The rest of the material, again, was recycled from the earlier Chesler titles of the pre-war period. After the third issue appeared in early 1945 *Spotlight Comics* was discontinued The Black Dwarf continued in *Red Seal Comics* cover dated October 1945 (the markings on the original art

for the Black Dwarf story for this issue indicates it was originally slated to appear in *Spotlight Comics* #4—which obviously never happened). An ex-football player who decided to take on crime, the only quality that qualified him for his "dwarf" name was his diminutive sobriquet of "Shorty Wilson." He took on criminals no matter the risk. The Black Dwarf "chuckles whenever the odds favor death." Assisted by his ragtag team of ex-criminals—"Nitro," "Fly" and "Arsenic" (who "abdicated" her life as former queen of the blackmail rackets to fight with the Black Dwarf)—the Dwarf was not hesitant to use violent strong-arm tactics against the denizens who littered the underworld of crime. Other crime fighters rounded out the magazine such as "Lucky Coyne" (still going strong since the mention of the feature on the cover in *Cheerio*), Little Nemo and a western hero known as the "Gay Desperado." By issue 17, Lady Satan joined the title. However, instead of Nazi opponents, she was a wielder of magic fighting foes of a more goulish nature.

Fran Smith drew the Black Dwarf and most of the covers for *Red Seal*. Included as illustrations in this article are two unpublished covers by Smith. The Black Dwarf cover, with the tiger and Arsenic in distress, is wonderfully rendered by Smith. It obviously was intended as a cover for a *Red Seal* issue. The other unpublished cover of Rocket Man and Rocket Girl again is magnificently drawn but never made it as a cover for *Punch Comics* which continued their feature. Perhaps it was a bit too much to "swallow" having rocket packs operating under water.

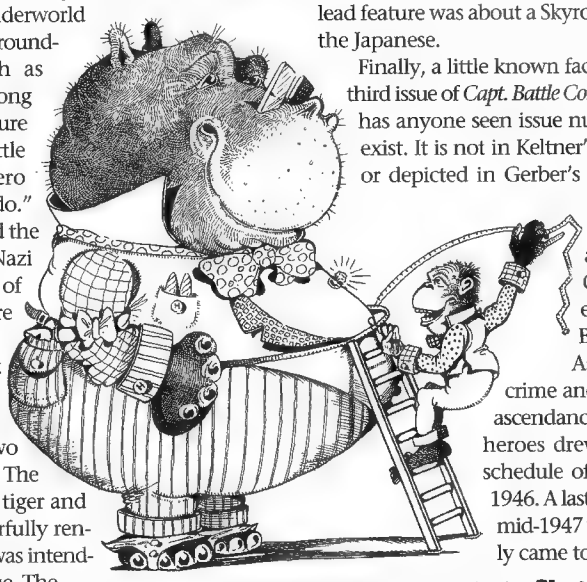
As Chesler tried to resume a regular publishing schedule, he recycled many of his pre-hero and pre-war period stories in each of the resurrected titles. Chesler even reproduced a prior splash page as a cover. The Lady Satan cover for *Bullseye Comics* #11 is the splash created by Tuska for the Lady Satan story in *Dynamic* #2. (Although not directly within the Chesler comicbook line note that the splash for the Rocket Man story in *Scoop* #2, January 1942, became the cover for *Zip Jet Comics* when the story was reprinted in February 1953. This Rocket Man story from *Scoop* #2 was also reprinted in issue number 10 of the resurrected *Punch Comics* cover dated September 1944. This issue also reprinted the Master Key story from *Scoop* #3. *Punch* #9 reprinted features from *Scoop*.)

Punch #11 contained mainly new material (Rocket Man was reprinted from *Scoop* #3) but the features and art were second rate. Master Key was now strictly battling crime and the new art did not compare with the earlier work of Sultan. The "Major Victory" yarns from *Dynamic* were recycled and packaged for some minor publishing entities in three issues of *Major Victory Comics* in 1945/1946.

Chesler packaged (for Home Guide Publications) a single issue of *Skyrocket Comics* sometime in 1944. The book slapped together a character named the "Ghost Hunter" with another feature called "Dr. Vampire" who "casts a grim shadow across the trail of fiends who thirst for nice warm blood." The lead feature was about a Skyrocket plane used to demoralize the Japanese.

Finally, a little known fact is that Chesler produced the third issue of *Capt. Battle Comics* (Winter 1942). (As an aside has anyone seen issue number 4? It probably does not exist. It is not in Keltner's exhaustive golden age index or depicted in Gerber's *Photo-Journal*.) The fifth issue completely reprinted the contents of *Capt. Battle Comics* #1 as originally produced by Lev Gleason and Chesler's old employees of Biro and the Binder brothers.

As the 1940s drew to a close, crime and horror features were in their ascendancy while the first age of superheroes drew to a close. The publishing schedule of Chesler titles grew erratic in 1946. A last gasp of production occurred in mid-1947 when the Chesler imprint finally came to an end.



Original Art for Funny Picture Stories 2/3 (Nov 1937) as drawn by Dick Ryan. This is a typical example of his art and features which were ubiquitous for Chesler, Ultem and Centaur Publications in the late 1930s.

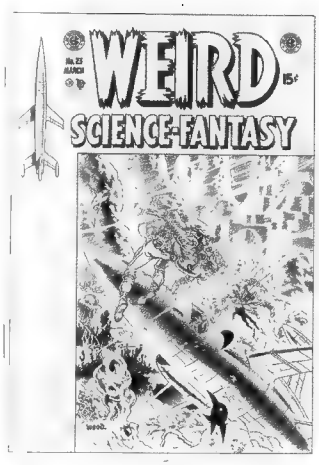
Closing Notes

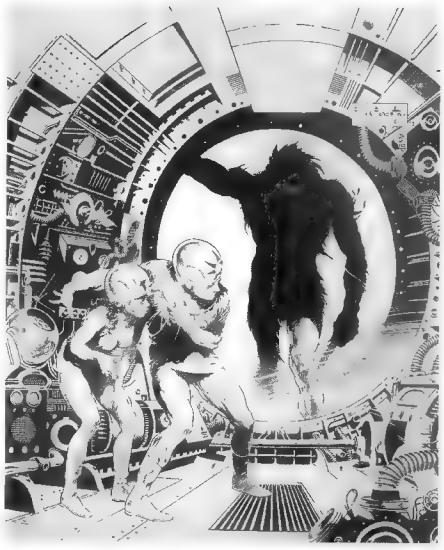
Clearly the breadth of the Chesler production spanning the earliest years of the birth of the comicbook until the waning years of the golden age of super-heroes assures Chesler a place in the pantheon of comicbook entrepreneurs and producers. Many stalwarts of the comicbook art form developed and perfected their craft working for Chesler. It was pioneers such as Chesler that added not only to the mythos of comicbooks but to their development and growth as a truly American art form.

The author would like to acknowledge, in addition to the primary source material, the assistance of reference works by Howard Keltner, Jerry Bails, Ron Goulart and Mike Benton in production of this article.

Jon Berk is a comicbook collector from Connecticut. His focus is on early Golden Age comics history. This article was designed by Michael Kronenberg, a* CBM *reader who is the art director for* Monsters from the Vault *magazine.

Heritage Auction Breaks Records



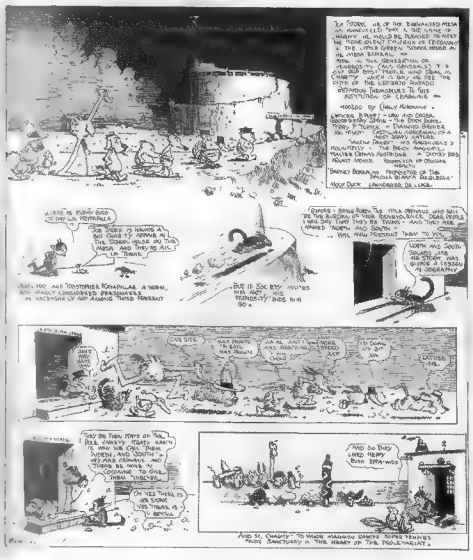


(left to right) 6643 Wally Wood **Weird Science-Fantasy** #23 cover art - $21,850; 6546 Hal Foster **Tarzan** Sunday strip - $23,000; 6710 Frank Frazetta **Famous Funnies** #213 cover art - $100,625

Over 1200 clients placed bids by phone, mail, over the Internet or live in-person at the second Heritage Comics Signature auction, and the results were truly spectacular! The auction took place at the Hotel Inter-Continental in Dallas on March 15-16. Net actual sales reached an impressive $2,601,931.35 for the 1147 lots that actually sold. No previous comics/ posters auction has ever broken the $2 million mark!

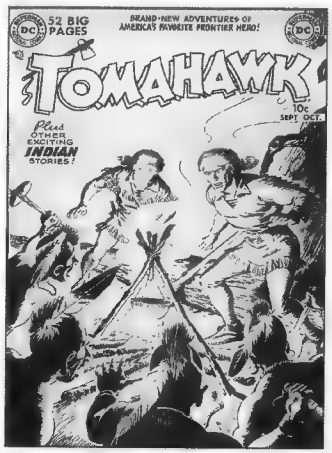
"We're exhausted!" said HCA Director John Petty. "But we're also VERY pleased, and more important than that, so are our consignors. We're really looking forward to our next Signature event July 5-7 at Wizard World Chicago. Needless to say, fantastic new consignments are already pouring in daily!"

Note: 346 lots did not meet hammer reserves totaling $633,871. Therefore, the auction was 76.82% sold by number of lots and 80.41% sold by dollar value. Had every lot sold (which rarely, if ever, happens), the auction would have grossed $3.235 million or more.

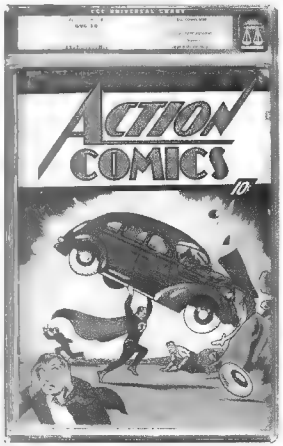


6533 Geo. Harriman **Krazy Kat** Sunday strip - $12,075

6625 Al Feldstein **Weird Fantasy** #7 cover art - $13,800



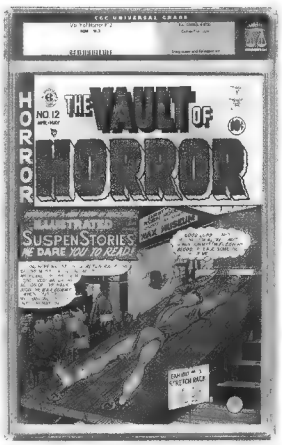
6661 Fred Ray **Tomahawk** #1 cover art - $16,100



6861 **Action Comics** #1 CGC GD/VG 3.0 Cream to off-white pages - $48,300

6712 **Amazing Fantasy** #15 Curator copy CGC VF/NM 9.0 Off-white to white pages - $44,275

6715 **The Amazing Spider-Man** #1 CGC VF/NM 9.0 Off-white to white pages - $21,850



6220 **The Vault of Horror** #12 Gaines File Copy CGC NM- 9.2 White pages - $29,900 (over 6 times Overstreet Guide)

Even more impressive than the $2.6 million sell-through was some of the record-shattering individual prices realized at the sale. Comic books certified by CGC (Comics Guaranty, LLC, http://www.CGCcomics.com) were especially strong. All prices, along with full descriptions and enlargeable full color images, are available to www.HeritageComics.com members in Heritage's Permanent Auction Archive. Membership is free.

On these pages are some of the highlights of this record-breaking auction.

5054 **Day the Earth Stood Still** One-sheet - $13,500

5158 **Dark Passage** Insert - $3,600

5393 **King Kong** One-sheet style A - $78,200

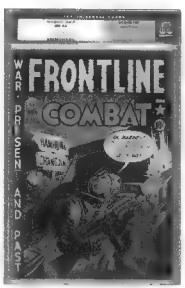
5401 **King Kong** One-sheet style B - $36,800

5146 **Red Dust** One-sheet - $14,375

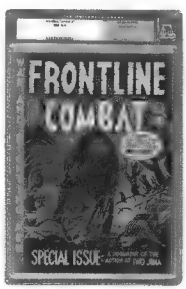
5109 **The Klondike Kid** One-sheet - $42,550

6019 **Marvel Comics** #1 CGC GD 2.0 Cream to off-white pages - $17,250 (Guide: $14,000)

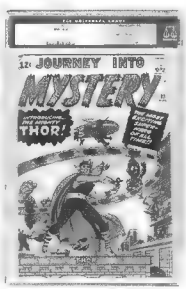
6954 **Detective Comics** #58 CGC NM 9.4 Cream to off-white pages - $20,700 (almost 5 times Guide)



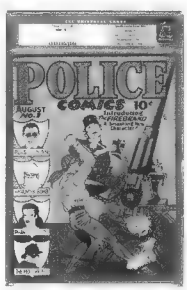
6058 **Frontline Combat** #1 Gaines File Copy CGC NM 9.4 Off-white to white pages - $6612.50 (10 times Guide price)



6065 **Frontline Combat** #7 Gaines File Copy CGC NM 9.4 White pages - $3105 (15 times Guide)



6773 **Journey into Mystery** #83 CGC NM- 9.2 Off-white pages - $18,400 (high estimate $15,000)



6429 **Police Comics** #1 Windy City copy CGC NM- 9.2 Off-white pages - $19,550

6793 **X-Men** #1 CGC NM- 9.2 Off-white pages - $18,400

Oddball Comics © 2002 by Scott Shaw! CBM91-5

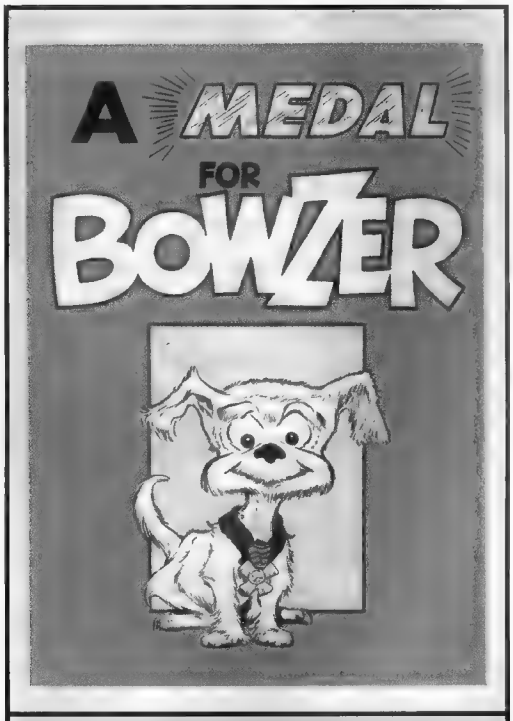
ODDBALL COMICS experiments on a medical mutt named Bowser—courtesy of the creator of THE SPIRIT!

This rarely seen eight-page giveaway comic was written and drawn by the great Will Eisner (and probably inked by Klaus Nordling), creator of THE SPIRIT! Rumored to be advocating the vivisection of animals, *A Medal for Bowzer* (which is subtitled "The Story Of One Dog's Life") carries a somewhat milder—but no less propagandistic—message regarding medical experimentation on animals. Here's how, in typically engaging form, Will starts Bowzer's story:

"In this very city, right now there are countless dogs, sick, homeless, and perhaps dangerous, who wander about our community a menace and a nuisance...Most of them will be caught! Placed in a pound where (according to some city laws) in a matter of hours THEY WILL BE PUT TO DEATH! THIS IS A TRAGIC ERROR! Without any good reason—and out of misguided sentiment, some people are DESTROYING MAN'S BEST FRIEND! Had these poor animals been allowed to LIVE they would have lived out useful and happy lives befriending mankind...like 'BOWSER' whose documented story is presented..."

Bowzer is a common mutt who wanders the streets and back alleys of the city. One day, he's cornered by a stick-poking kid, who pushes Bowzer a bit too far, and gets a dog bite for his effort! Nabbed by the dogcatcher, Bowzer is taken to the pound, where he meets others dogs of his doomed ilk. Bowzer informs his fellow inmates that their fate is sealed; they'll be gassed as soon as the legal time limit permits!

Later that day, a Dr. Goodlee visits the pound. He's looking for a stray dog to test his new pneumonia cure, but is interrupted by Mrs. Doogood, head of the Pet Protection Society. She's about to stop Dr. Goodlee, but receives a call that her son's been suddenly rushed to the hospital with pneumonia! There, her son's physician offers an untried pneumonia cure to save her son, but she regards



A MEDAL FOR BOWZER
ISSUE NUMBER: None
COVER DATE: 1966
PUBLISHER: American Visuals Corporation
COVER ARTIST: Will Eisner

this as risky experimentation and refuses such treatment. Meanwhile, Bowzer is planning a "jailbreak" from the pound, but is intercepted in mid-escape by Dr. Goodlee. Check out this exchange of dialog:

DR. GOODLEE: Careful, fella! Say, you shouldn't try to escape…they'll catch you ANYHOW!

BOWZER: Hey! Doctor Goodlee—YOU TALK DOG TALK!

DR. GOODLEE: Of course! I have a pet of my own! He's working in the lab at the hospital now!

BOWZER: Gosh, I'D like a job there too!

DR. GOODLEE: I wish I could help, but it's not legal in this city to use animals for research. Besides, we don't usually pick up strays off the street!

BOWZER: Well, nobody ever thought of askin' MY consent. Take me with you, Doc…I'm doomed to death anyhow, so what have I got to lose? Arf!

Several days later, Mrs. Doogood shows up at Dr. Goodlee's lab; she's accompanied by a policeman, who *arrests* the doctor for taking Bowzer to experiment upon! But thanks to Bowzer's involvement, Dr. Goodlee has discovered a cure, which saves Mrs. Doogood's son's life! She drops all her charges against him, and Dr. Goodlee is released from the city jail. Mrs. Doogood's changed her mind about animal testing, but asks:

MRS. DOOGOOD: I understand it now! And I'm explaining it to my committee.

But the little dogs…what happens to them after the experiments are over?

DR. GOODLEE: Come to the lab and I'll show you!

MRS. DOOGOOD: Why, they're all here…HAPPY and they HAVE a HOME. Some of them even have owners, too!

DR. GOODLEE: Yes, Bowzer's a real hero of medicine! All he needs now is a medal!

If you're like me, I'm sure you're probably wondering what happens to all the dogs that don't survive the experiments. Considering this comic's stance on animal rights, it's probably better not to ask!

ODDBALL Factoid: Extraordinary cartoonist Will Eisner has created many promotional comics in the span of his career, including a long run on *P.S.* magazine, an instructional digest he created specifically for the U.S. Army!

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board, but we don't see his face. In the picture, Watterson has just arisen from his chair, apparently interrupted by an approaching photographer, and Watterson, acting in self-defense, has raised his arms and hands to shield his face so the photographer can't get a clear shot of him.

Just what you'd expect the famously reclusive Watterson to do, in other words.

Recognizing a scoop when I saw it, I obtained permission to take a photograph of the picture. And I did. But when I got home and opened my camera to remove the film—alors! somehow, the film had not been engaged by the take-up sprockets and so had not spooled through the camera. The whole roll was a dud.

I should have known the effort was doomed. When I arrived at the six- or seven-story building in which Universal Press had its offices then, at 4900 Main Street, I couldn't get in. Everyone was pouring out of it. Fire alarm. We all milled around for twenty minutes until the "all clear" sounded, permitting us to enter the premises.

Universal Press has since moved to new digs at 4520 Main Street, but Watterson's wickedly impedimentary self-portrait still hangs in its hallway. "It now has lights and

Mystery Man

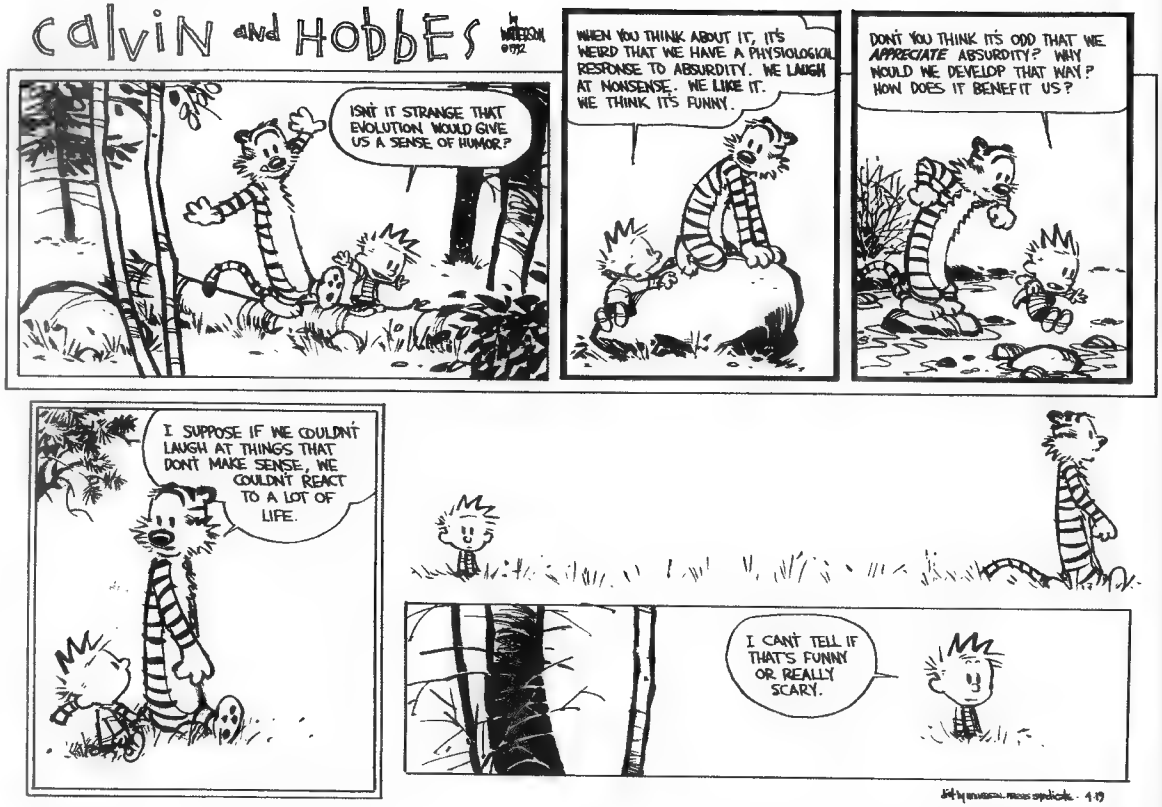
Very few people have actually seen Bill Watterson. Or even photographs of him. Once *Calvin and Hobbes* got going, he apparently didn't permit himself to be photographed. But in the early months of his celebrated strip's run, his image was captured by at least one lensman, and at least one newspaper article was accompanied by this photograph.

For a while, I had a copy of that newspaper article. I'm sure I still have it. I just don't know where it is.

A picture of Watterson hangs in a corridor of his syndicate's offices in Kansas City. I saw it when I went there in the spring of 1996 to interview another Universal Press cartoonist, Bill Amend, who produces *FoxTrot*.

This hallway portrait of Watterson is a self-caricature, a wonderful artifact that, in the peculiar way of caricature, mocks as it illuminates. He depicts himself at the drawing

Before **Calvin and Hobbes**, Watterson struggled, briefly, as an editorial cartoonist. The cartoonist above doesn't, probably, look as much like Watterson as Calvin's father does, but it suggests the frustrations Watterson felt in the editorial page endeavor in which many a hard-hitting cartoon is killed by an editor reluctant to provoke his readers' ire. Here, the cartoonist is clearly motivated by his personal experience on the city's streets rather than his convictions about public policy.


calvin and hobbes
©1992
ISN'T IT STRANGE THAT EVOLUTION WOULD GIVE US A SENSE OF HUMOR?
WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT IT, IT'S WEIRD THAT WE HAVE A PHYSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO ABSURDITY. WE LAUGH AT NONSENSE. WE LIKE IT. WE THINK IT'S FUNNY.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S ODD THAT WE APPRECIATE ABSURDITY? WHY WOULD WE DEVELOP THAT WAY? HOW DOES IT BENEFIT US?
I SUPPOSE IF WE COULDN'T LAUGH AT THINGS THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE, WE COULDN'T REACT TO A LOT OF LIFE.
I CAN'T TELL IF THAT'S FUNNY OR REALLY SCARY.

About this strip in the **Sunday Pages** book, Watterson writes: "This strip was done in the new half-page format. It has only six panels, but I think the space is used attractively. To an editor, space may be money, but to a cartoonist, space is time. Space provides the tempo and rhythm of the strip. Used well, it directs the eye to speed up or linger. The long drawing of Hobbes' walking away is a sort of visual brake. It's empty, so the eye rests there and the panel creates a pause." The pause gives Calvin time to think. And that pause, that passage of time, gives comedic impact to his concluding remark.

flowers around it," quipped Lee Salem, Universal's Executive Vice President and Editor, when I asked him about it.

At the time of my visit, *Calvin and Hobbes* had been retired only a little more than a year, and there were still vague hopes at the syndicate that Watterson could be persuaded to produce something occasionally. A calendar perhaps.

Salem, at the time, couldn't say, for sure, whether *Calvin and Hobbes* was gone forever. Interviewed right about then by John C. Kuehner, a reporter for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Salem said, "I'm not sure the creative impulse Watterson has has been entirely fulfilled. We've talked to him about it. He's open to it. We've talked about some ideas, how to return to newspapers. But I think it's low on his list of priorities."

Very low. So low, in fact, that, except for a single, shining instance (which we'll get to when we get to Chagrin Falls), we've not seen or heard Watterson or Calvin or Hobbes since. Until the fall of 2001.

On the fall of 2001, the Cartoon Research Library at Ohio State University mounted an exhibition of *Calvin and Hobbes* original art Sunday strips in conjunction with the Festival of Cartoon Art that is staged by the CRL once every three years. For the exhibition, Watterson had selected 36 strips, and for the exhibition catalogue, he provided an introduction and annotations on each of the strips.

The handsome full-color catalogue, *Calvin and Hobbes: Sunday Pages 1985-1995*, is an almost unique undertaking. Each Sunday strip appears twice, on facing pages. The left-hand page presents a strip in black-and-white; the right-

hand page, the same strip as it was published in newspapers in color. Watterson's annotations run beneath the artwork.

The original art is not, actually, "black-and-white." The artwork was photographed in "color," and it is published that way, so we see black lines against a sort of cream-colored background. The object of this maneuver is to show Watterson's drawings in the book exactly as they appeared on the exhibition walls—with shadowy pencil lines behind the inking, occasional blotches of white-out, the uneven coats of black ink wherever solid black appears, and so on. Available through Andrews McMeel (96 9x12-inch pages; $12.95), *Sunday Pages* is a delectable repast with a master chef of the medium setting the table.

In the introduction, the reclusive Watterson discusses his working methods, his inspirations, and his frustrations with the limitations and politics of syndicated newspaper cartooning. He also speaks with great affection of the form: "It's been five years since the end of *Calvin and Hobbes*," he writes, "the longest time I can remember in which I haven't drawn cartoons. *Calvin and Hobbes* was a wonderful experience, but it was an all-consuming career. When I quit the strip, I put my cartoons in boxes, and jumped into other interests. I haven't really considered the strip since...."

But he has apparently kept an eye on the funnies. He gently alludes, for instance, to a device that he employed with great effect which other cartoonists now use so routinely as to undermine its impact. At the beginning of *Calvin and Hobbes*, we sometimes saw Hobbes as Calvin's parents saw him—as a stuffed toy. But mostly, we saw Hobbes as Calvin saw him—as a real tiger. Similarly, Watterson depicted Spaceman Spiff as Calvin imagined himself to be, rocketing through the chilly void of space, making a rough landing on the rocky surface of an uninhabited planet.

"I did this," Watterson explains, "simply as a way to put the reader in Calvin's head and to reveal his imaginative personality. Now these juxtapositions are a visual game for many comic strips, and after all these years, I suspect readers know where this sort of joke is headed as soon as they see it. The novelty cannot be recaptured."

Watterson no longer does any cartooning. Instead, he has been teaching himself to paint, he says, and he's learning about music. But when he unpacked storage boxes of his original strips to pick pieces for the exhibit, he discovered anew his passion. "I no longer take quite so much for granted the versatility of comics and their ability to depict complex ideas in a beautiful, accessible, and entertaining form. For all their seeming simplicity, the expressive possibilities of comics rival those of any other art form. Five years after *Calvin and Hobbes*, I love the comics as much as ever."

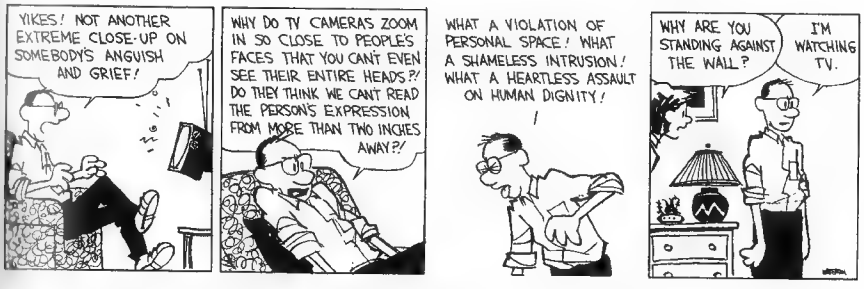
But he still continues to paint and to study music instead of cartooning.

From this tidbit, we learn that he doesn't need to work for a living. He doubtless made enough on the ten-year run of *Calvin and Hobbes* to take care of his needs for the rest of his life. No surprise.

When Watterson retired, he said he was quitting because "I've done what I can do within the constraints of daily deadlines and small panels." The strenuous implication was that he had done all he could do, a highly suspicious assertion. Watterson, after all, was a satirist of the human condition, and a good satirist knows that he's never finished. The world goes on, willy-nilly, day-by-day, and every day, some brand new sparkling human idiocy bobs up to the surface, some annoying inanity richly deserving of the satirist's jab.

No, the real reasons for Watterson's retirement had more to do with fatigue and finance than lifelong satirical missions. For most of the strip's run, he fought against merchandising his characters. He also fought for better treatment of the artform. And in both battles, he was more successful than he could have imagined he would be when he started. His syndicate respected his wishes about merchandising and didn't flood the universe with plush Hobbes toys. And in the last years of the strip, the Sunday was sold to client papers on the condition that they not change its format, the configuration of panels in whatever storytelling design Watterson devised for that day's release.

But the struggle to retain what he regarded as the integrity of his creation was surely a wearying endeavor. Watterson was clearly pretty exhausted by it. And he eventually realized that he


YIKES! NOT ANOTHER EXTREME CLOSE-UP ON SOMEBODY'S ANGUISH AND GRIEF!
WHY DO TV CAMERAS ZOOM IN SO CLOSE TO PEOPLE'S FACES THAT YOU CAN'T EVEN SEE THEIR ENTIRE HEADS?! DO THEY THINK WE CAN'T READ THE PERSON'S EXPRESSION FROM MORE THAN TWO INCHES AWAY?!
WHAT A VIOLATION OF PERSONAL SPACE! WHAT A SHAMELESS INTRUSION! WHAT A HEARTLESS ASSAULT ON HUMAN DIGNITY!
WHY ARE YOU STANDING AGAINST THE WALL?
I'M WATCHING TV.

Calvin's father looks vaguely like Watterson, if Harvey's recollection of a long-lost photograph is to be trusted.

didn't need to continue to do it. He had money enough in the bank.

Considering that the art he produced was brutalized by the medium that distributed it—the newspapers that run comic strips so small that any real artistry is smudged away—and that he didn't need the money, it's no wonder that Watterson gave it up. No one goes on beating himself over the head any longer than necessary.

In the introduction to *Sunday Pages*, we see Watterson in prose, personable and kindly and articulate, supremely articulate. Watterson in person? Well, I wouldn't know. But no one is much different from the image of him that emerges in his art—in his strip, and in the several essays (like this introduction) that he wrote over the decade of *Calvin and Hobbes*' run. Some years ago, though—soon after he retired—we found out just a smidgeon more about him.

If you think Watterson has been foraging among the cacti in a New Mexico desert since retiring *Calvin and Hobbes* on December 31, 1995, think again. That's what I thought; but I found out different.

Actually, Watterson gave up on the New Mexico desert before giving up on the strip. He and his wife Melissa moved back to their hometown, Chagrin Falls, Ohio, in the fall of 1995. They bought a three-bedroom house, where Watterson has been painting ever since.

This news comes to us through the enterprise of the aforementioned newspaper reporter John C. Kuehner, who actually summoned the temerity to approach the absentee cartoonist in his lair.

"The 40-year old Watterson declined a formal interview," Kuehner reported, "but in a conversation at his door, where he would not allow any notes to be taken, Watterson stressed that he does not want to live, nor should he have to live, in a fish bowl or have to deal with intrusions into his life by the curious."

Nothing daunted, Kuehner looked up Watterson's parents, who still live in Chagrin Falls. The cartoonist's mother, Kathryn, said, "He definitely wants to disappear."

Watterson pere agreed, adding that when the two couples dine out together at a local restaurant, the populace understands that they are to be left strictly alone.

"They might wonder, Gee—was that your son with you?" he said, "but they are polite and don't ask."

Everyone in Chagrin Falls, apparently, is in on the charade and pretends that one of the world's most admired cartoonists doesn't live anywhere around. And even if he does, no one ever sees him. And even if they see him, they don't recognize him. And even if they recognize him, they don't.

This is admirable community spirit. This is the sort of spirit that built the Panama Canal and put a man on the moon. Real togetherness of a highly refined, dedicated, sort. You have to admire that.

Still, in a wild moment of utterly mindless speculation (I'm always losing my head while those about me are keeping theirs), I had to wonder if maybe Watterson's desire for anonymity isn't just a trifle on the extreme edge.

I have always applauded his determination to thwart the ever-prying press in its unrelenting drive to make every citizen's most private thoughts a matter of public record from coast to coast. I've thought for years that this kind of merciless pursuit of a "story" is a much-distorted exercise of First Amendment obligations. I'm not sure how much The Public actually has "a right to know."

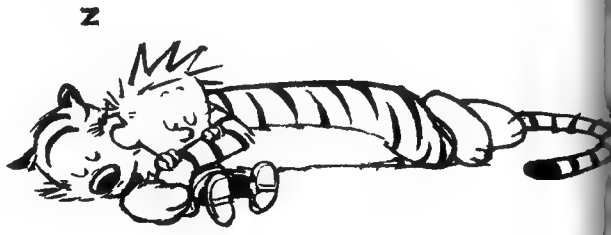
So I've usually rubbed my hands in fiendish glee whenever I read of Watterson's frustrating the press once again. But I begin to wonder, now, if maybe his passion for privacy hasn't turned perverse. Remember Howard Hughes? He dropped out of the public spotlight years before he died. And the report is that he didn't trim his fingernails or toenails for years. The Watterson family should be on the look out for similar evidences of derangement in their cartooning celebrity—untrimmed fingernails, unkempt beard, unruly nostril hair.

I'm still in favor of Watterson doing what he wants to do—and keeping the press completely in the dark about it. But I miss Watterson's strip. And I worry about his grip on reality.

As for the future, Salem is as much in doubt about it as are we all. "We've talked to Bill about a wide variety of projects," he told me, "and continue to do so. The good news is he still listens. The bad news is he still says, 'No.'"

Oh—what does Watterson look like? He looks a lot like Calvin's father.

Next time, if Winnie doesn't find her brother among the periwinkles or Tillie her beau at McDonald's thereby invoking Polly's long-suffering Paw even more accurately than that darn cat does with every imitative posture, we'll solve another long-standing mystery, that of Mary Worth, during which unraveling we'll answer, for once and all, the question of where she came from and who she was.



THE Greatest COMIC BOOK ever!

well...for this month at least

by **Mark Squirek**

The cover is an absolute classic. Alan Scott and Hal Jordan square off in an arena setting, surrounded by concerned Guardians. Each Guardian is watching for a different reason—the one on the far left almost seems to relish the idea of Gladiatorial Combat!—eagerly awaiting the outcome. The large banner of the Green Lantern Corps that hangs behind them only heightens the feeling of Imperial spectacle.

Written by John Broome, art by Gil Kane, *Green Lantern* #40 gives us the "Secret Origin of the Guardians." Tightly plotted, Broome not only gives us tremendous action, but on a separate level, he brings ideas such as the "universal creation myth" into play. Who does not want to know where they came from? What society on Earth has ever developed without a legend of their own creation? The idea that some knowledge should remain unknown moves across many religions and beliefs.

As complete as Broome's plotting is (Julie Schwartz considered Broome "...possibly my finest plotter at the time...John was my best writer, the best man at my wedding, my best friend."), it is matched by the crisp, athletic lines of Gil Kane.

I believe this book is the first time that any real back history on the Oans is introduced. The Oan Society is created in four clean, precise panels on page seven. "They strode the planet like giants," says Broome as Kane shows an overview of the modern Oan city. The next panel establishes the way they socially interact, as well as the cultural expectations of the Oans themselves. The mother's pride in her child's ability to mentally lift the boulder at such a young age is slightly diminished by her need to brag about it to her friend. The slight one-upmanship of the two women is almost human and takes the Oans down a peg from perfection. When we meet the scientist in the next panel he is striving for success, but his repeated failure is tempered by his understanding that he is immortal, so there is no real need for him to obsess over failure. The fourth panel gives us a view of the Oans at play. They are happy riding giant frogs (Gil Kane seems to have enjoyed the frog riding a great deal; it shows up again 20-odd years later in "The Sword of the Atom").

All is well on Planet Oa until we meet Krona, a renegade scientist (the most interesting type), who wishes to find the exact point of creation. At the very moment he is watching an unknown hand dip into a mass of space at what he believes is the beginning of time, the machine explodes and the Oan's fear is realized—Evil is loosed on the Universe throughout time!

The Oans, out of guilt for their part in loosing evil upon the Universe, eventually create the Green Lantern Corps and give employment to countless numbers of different aliens who have no fear.

A couple of billion years later, Krona uses Alan Scott to get free. He is able to use Alan Scott's power because it is "occult based." During the creation of the Green Lantern Corps it is learned that the Oans are using a "radiation" type power to fuel their own Corps. This quick, simple explanation of the two Green Lantern's powers, (occult vs. radiation), opened many doors for those who would write Green Lantern in the following years. This is one of those moments that continuity lovers really enjoy.

GREEN LANTERN
TURN IN YOUR POWER RING AND UNIFORM, HAL JORDAN! ALAN SCOTT IS REPLACING YOU AS GREEN LANTERN OF EARTH!
THAT HAS-BEEN'S NOT CUTTING ME OUT UNLESS HE CAN BEAT ME IN A POWER-RING DUEL!
YOU'VE CLAMORED FOR IT--SO HERE IT IS!
A POWER-PACKED NOVEL CO-STARRING THE "ORIGINAL" AND "MODERN DAY" GREEN LANTERNS IN A FIGHT TO THE FINISH!
The SECRET ORIGIN of the GUARDIANS!

Years later, Marv Wolfman and George Perez would use this book as a major reference point for the logic of *Crisis on Infinite Earths*. Issue seven of *Crisis* refers directly to Krona's experiments with time. Perez goes so far as to recreate several of Kane's panels with reverence and individuality.

If you envision the entire history of the DC Universe as an hourglass, and with the Golden Age Superman as the very top and the modern Anime-influenced version as the base, you can take the panel from *Green Lantern* #40 where Krona is looking back into time and center that as the point where the past moves into the future.

Inspiration Central

Murphy Anderson – Part Two of Three

by Bill Baker

Editor's Note: Continuing on our slightly different twist on Inspiration Central from last issue, we're continuing to explore the inspiration Murphy Anderson has brought to the industry, both professionally and personally.

DAVE COCKRUM
Artist, co-creator The New X-Men

I first met Murphy Anderson around 1970-71, when I came to New York looking for work in the comics industry. I'd done a few jobs for Jim Warren at Warren Publications, but it seemed I wasn't quite ready for professional work at Marvel or DC. However, during one visit to DC, someone mentioned that Murphy was looking for a background inker to help him out on Superman and Superboy. Of course, as a fan, I'd known of Murphy's work for years. He'd done science fiction features like Captain Future and the Atomic Knights for DC, not to mention being the best inker DC had for pencilers like Curt Swan, Gil Kane, Carmine Infantino, and others. I'd always felt, too, that the interiors of the *JLA* books never lived up to Murphy's beautiful cover art.

The late Jack Abel was also doing backgrounds for him, but Murphy's workload was more than the two of them could handle. Murphy looked at my samples and decided to give me a tryout. I was scared to death on my first job, terrified I was going to ruin priceless Curt Swan pencils and be disgraced forever. However, I managed to turn in a passable job, and Murphy kept me on.

At first I worked from my home, but Murphy finally decided it would work better if we had a studio environment, and he set up an office in a building right across the street from Manhattan's main library, the one with the big stone lions guarding the front entrance. It would become a memorable learning and working experience. I gradually got into the flow of work, although a lot of my early pages had thick layers of white-out, to cover my mistakes. Murphy was patient and helpful, though, and I began to learn. I was very disappointed, however, when he got the John Carter of Mars strip for the *Weird Worlds* of Edgar Rice Burroughs title and he wouldn't let me help on that one. He was as big a fan of Burroughs Mars books as I was, and he wanted to do that strip all by himself, thank you.

Besides being a wonderful artist, Murphy was a kind and generous friend, a gentleman of the old school, and one of the most blatant and competitive punsters I ever met. I was subjected to one pun after another, all through the workday. Now, I'd had some minor tendency to punnage myself, but Murphy was a master, and I learned well. To this day, my wife blames Murphy for turning me into a punning monster. We also spent a lot of time swapping yarns and enjoying each other's company, to the point where we were finally shooting more bull than we were drawing comic books. After about a year of this, Murphy finally decided to close down the studio. By that time, however, I'd managed to land the Legion of Super-Heroes strip and was able to go my own way.

There are two men in the comics business that I've always looked on with a degree of idolization, almost, perhaps, as father figures. One is Julie Schwartz, whom I've always admired and wished I could have worked for, and the other is Murphy Anderson. If he hadn't helped out a rank newcomer and set me on my way, God knows whether I would have ever succeeded in the business. And to this day, whenever we run into each other, he reminds me that the Tharks of Barsoom knew in advance that John Carter was coming to Mars, because four-armed is...forewarned.

BEAU SMITH
Writer, editor, and last "real man" in comics

Murphy Anderson is the picture of a professional. Always turned in his best work and always on time. Always a gentle-

man and always looking that way. Always an influence and always an inspiration. Murphy Anderson...Forever and always!

MIKE BARON
Writer, co-creator of *Nexus*, *Badger*

Always loved Murphy's Superman. The delicate line work, the exquisite inking. Had a friend named Dave Lettick, who drew Little Orphan Annie, whose dad was a famous illustrator. Always talked about how Murphy was a regular guy.

AND SEVERAL DAYS LATER, WHEN THE ARMOR OF THE ATOMIC KNIGHTS IS FREE ENOUGH OF RADIATION FOR THEM TO WEAR IT AGAIN, A DEPARTURE...
YOUR SPEECH WORKED WONDERS, GARDNER! THE CRO-MAGNONS HAVE BECOME OUR FRIENDS! AND TO SPEED US ON OUR WAY, THEY BROUGHT US GIFTS!
YES, MARENE! BUT OUR GIFT TO THEM WAS MORE IMPORTANT-- THE KNOWLEDGE OF THEIR OWN HUMANITY!
IN TIME THESE "CAVEMEN" WILL REGAIN THEIR HUMAN APPEARANCE! BUT DUE TO THE RADIATION OUTSIDE, THEY MAY HAVE TO LIVE DOWN HERE FROM NOW ON!
EXIT
TIMES SQUARE AREA
The End!

A classic Atomic Knights panel, from a John Broome script!

ERIC REYNOLDS
Fantagraphics Books

I very clearly remember Curt Swan and Murphy Anderson's version of Superman being the first artistic style I was ever able to discern in comics or any art form; I was about six or seven. Anderson's inking had a quiet elegance in its feathering that helped, even before I had the vaguest notion of what "Art" was or that it even existed as a concept, my illiterate seven-year-old mind realized that comics couldn't possibly be cranked out by machines and must be made with human hands. It was a very powerful revelation, one that undoubtedly affected the rest of my life.

MICHAEL R. SMITH
Collector

I first met Murphy Anderson at the Baltimore Comicon in October of 2000, though of course I had "met" him through his work long before that and simply didn't know it, so closely intertwined are the public aspect of the man himself and the strong impression of dignity and sophistication created by his clean lines of ink and expert narrative draftsmanship.

Mr. Anderson and Roy Thomas had generously agreed to participate in a small Silver Age panel discussion, which I was nominally co-hosting at the Con (Thomas, a comics historian of the first order, actually did most of the work—a happy thing for all present, myself included). Thanks to Roy's intervention, the panel itself, though small, was nevertheless successful, due in equal measure to his command of the subject matter, and Murphy's impressive array of remembrances and anecdotes.

But my hero worship aside (we are, remember, talking about the man who, with Curt Swan, made Superman look Super when I first started reading comics), what struck me immediately about Mr. Anderson was how much he reminded me of my father and my uncle: not so much a physical resemblance, but rather a kind of generational similarity, if such a thing exists. Much of this, I think, is sartorial. All three men are sharp dressers and impeccably well-groomed, and one suspects not just for special occasions (I've seen my dad wear polished shoes and pressed slacks to go out for nothing more extravagant than an ice cream cone.) There seems to be an unwritten dress code embraced by many of the men who survived the Great Depression and World War II, something lost on perpetually unshaven, casual-chic moderns like me, the content of which is: always look your best, no matter where you are, what you're doing, or whom you're with.

That kind of tailored dignity in appearance and character, devoid of all affectation and vanity, has largely disappeared from American society in the 21st century; instead, it calls to mind much earlier periods in our history, when, for instance, veterans of the War Between the States would turn out in their Sunday finest, merely to sit on shaded porches, sipping lemonade, discussing the affairs of the day. In fact, those courtly traditions of the Old South are particularly apt when discussing Mr. Anderson. He is, after all, a native of North Carolina, and the very picture of the Distinguished Southern Gentleman. Not to imply by association that he is literally or intellectually of such an ancient vintage. Far from it. His memory of comics' past is crystal clear, his manner easy and engaging, his voice deep and smooth as dark molasses (think of Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* and you're on the right track). I draw these comparisons only to give you some sense of how, in the presence of such an august personage—despite his abundant graciousness—it is impossible for a thirty-something child of the 1970s like myself to feel anything but humbled and...well, frankly, sloppy.

Murphy Anderson the artist is every bit as fine as his justifiably venerated body of work would lead you to believe. He is a class act at a time when we desperately need them—in comics and society. Many of today's industry giants would do well to take note.

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

By J.C. Vaughn, Executive Editor

When new editor-in-chief Joe Quesada moved from heading the Marvel Knights line to heading up the whole editorial operation, one of his early dictums was that Marvel employees could not write comics and be on staff, too. Bill Rosemann saw this as basically a good thing, even though he knew it was a stumbling block that had just been placed in front of a tale he was itching to tell.

Known to internet surfers, comics journalists and fanzine correspondents as "Your Man @ Marvel," Rosemann has for several years worked in the marketing department at the House of Ideas, enjoying what he does but hoping for a shot to tell stories as well.

With his new mini-series, Deadline, *he's got a chance. Working with indy favorite artist Guy Davis (*Baker Street, The Marquis*), he's crafted an intelligent, witty and engaging story of Kat Farrell, a frustrated* Daily Bugle *reporter assigned—against her wishes—to the super-hero beat.*

Unlike many new series, Deadline *takes full advantage of not only the setting (it's squarely set in the Marvel Universe many of us have grown up with), but also of the conventions of the standard comic book format. Though replete with modern coloring and wonderful dialogue, it also features the well-defined page and panel construction, storytelling and imagination of classic Marvels. In attitude it owes more to modern cinema than to EC's* Extra! *(the last newspaper reporter comic of note), but in style it is pure comics, accessible to even the newest readers and the most jaded among us.*

Comic Book Marketplace: What was your first exposure to Marvel Comics as a fan?

Bill Rosemann: Believe it or not, it was those tiny, paperback-sized reprints that Pocketbooks did of the first 20 issues of *The Amazing Spider-Man*. I read those things about ten gazillion times—that may explain why I now wear glasses!

CBM: When did you start working at Marvel, and in what capacity?

Rosemann: Back in '93 I wrote articles for *Marvel Age* magazine, which was the in-house hype mag. And my first assignment involved going up on the roof of the Marvel offices to watch a photo shoot for Spider-Man! Then I eventually got hired as a copywriter—and wrote copy just for our section in the monthly *Previews* catalog—then I just continued from there!

CBM: A lot of fans and folks in the industry know you from your marketing efforts for Marvel. What's your background as a writer?

Rosemann: Let's see...I created 50 issues of *Heroes Greatest Battles* when I was 10 years old! Then there was the usual: writing for high school and college newspapers and magazines, majored (at good ol' Notre Dame) in English, then nine years writing all sorts of material for Marvel (including ads, catalogs, press releases, a two-part Sgt. Fury/Baron Blood painted story that ran a couple years ago in *Captain America*, and the back cover copy for *Heroes*). What a long, strange trip it's been!

CBM: When you were developing *Deadline*, was it with artist Guy Davis in mind or was it just a story that happened to fit his particular talents?

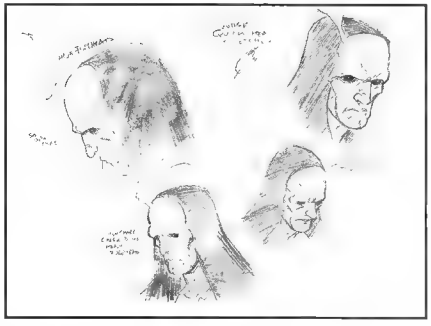
Rosemann: I was a huge fan of Guy's work for years and years, and it was his art I had in mind when I wrote the original outline. His ability to make characters look like real humans, his eye for detail, his amazing architecture, and his phenomenally strong storytelling skills all were sought out here. *Deadline* is an urban noir thriller, and no one's better at that than Guy. He's a pro's pro, or as Joe Quesada called him "the real deal." Landing Guy Davis on *Deadline* is like a first-time director saying, "The name on the top of my wish list to star in this movie is Robert DeNiro"—and then DeNiro signs up!

CBM: When did you first become aware of his work?

Rosemann: I've followed everything Guy's done since *Sandman Mystery Theatre*. And I recently read *The Marquis* and *Nevermen* and was blown away! Now I have to track down issues of *Baker Street* to find out what I missed!

CBM: This doesn't seem like the type of series Marvel would have produced a few years ago. Without putting your marketing hat back on, what made it seem like a good time to submit something like this?

Rosemann: From *Alias* to *X-Force*, Marvel has been producing more and more stories that comment on—and reflect—the real world around us, so I knew my time was now or never. And here's a funny story: when he climbed behind the controls as EIC, Joe Quesada sent down an edict that no staffers at Marvel could write for us. As our Marketing Manager, this made perfect sense, knowing we had to re-establish the Marvel name with fresh talent. But as a writer who had a few back-up stories under his belt, I was burning to tell this story. And I knew someone else would turn in a similar pitch because, let's face it, telling a story from the point of view of a *Daily Bugle* reporter isn't that ground-breaking. It's been done before and it was only a matter of time before someone wanted to do it again.



Joe Quesada's concept sketches for The Judge.

So I wrote up a pitch and put it on Joe's desk with a note that read: "I know staffers can't write for us, and I'm cool with that. But if that rule ever changes in a year, two years, whenever, I would like to tell a story like this." And the pitch was actually written in the voice of the main character, Kat. I guess something in it clicked with Joe, because he gave it the green light, but not before he had me rewrite the outline four times. So even before it was handed over to Tom Brevoort and Marc Sumerak and Jeff Youngquist, Joe had helped me for over a month to get it tight. He told me that since I was a staffer, I would be scrutinized more than other writers, so he wanted to be even harder on me than anyone else to make sure it was a good story. And if Joe knows one thing—that is, beyond being one of today's greatest artists—it's the elements of a good story. And did I tell you how cool his design of The Judge is?!

CBM: What was the genesis of the story behind *Deadline*?

Rosemann: I've always been fascinated with the idea of being a reporter for a big city paper. When I was a kid, I didn't want to be Superman, I wanted to be Clark Kent. For me, some of the most compelling scenes in Peter Parker's life were not when he was swinging above the streets as Spider-Man, but while he was tearing through the frenzied halls of the Daily Bugle. So I just took that idea and ran with it, exploring what it would really be like to be a reporter in a town overrun by strange beings in latex. On top of that, I've always dug gothic romances like those in *Wuthering Heights* and even *Interview With The Vampire*; plus the dark visions of movie directors such as Tim Burton. So I just let all those influences pour through my fingers, and *Deadline* came out.

As for direct inspirations, You may not see them on the surface, but things that influenced me, that percolate in my mind, are there in *Deadline*: movies like *His Girl Friday* and *City of Lost Children*, TV shows like *NYPD Blue* and *The Prisoner*, books like *The Alienist* and *Catcher in the Rye*. But most importantly, I'm inspired by New York City itself. After admiring it from afar, I've lived in the Big Apple since 1993, soaking up its energy and character every day. If anything has influenced me the most it's the style, the grit, and the heart of Manhattan and its people.

CBM: Going back to your influences, you've got really crisp, snappy dialogue. It reads like people speak, or more precisely how we like people to speak, and yet it seems right at home in a comic. Who do you think does great dialogue in comics or elsewhere?

Rosemann: Wow, thanks for the compliment. To me—and a growing number of readers— dialogue is key. We're a generation that grew up on movies, so that's what we want to "hear" in a comic, too. So while my style of writing

Cover artist Greg Horn's striking cover images create a strong, yet fitting counterpoint to the interior art by Guy Davis

very impressed with Darwyn Cooke's writing in *Tangled Web* #11. And Grant Morrison's work in *New X-Men* is super sharp. When it comes to other media, I'm a long-time watcher of *NYPD Blue*, and—believe it or not—the WWF. Many scoff at them, but Vince McMahon and company know how to introduce characters, build storylines, and direct audience reaction. Finally, I'm a big watcher of movies with "realistic" (i.e.overlapping, relaxed) dialogue, from *His Girl Friday* to *The Godfather* to *Rocky* to *Memento*.

CBM: How did you come up with the character of Katherine "Kat" Farrell?

Rosemann: Honestly, I don't know. Her voice just popped into my head as I was getting the pitch together. Perhaps she's a combo of characteristics of some of my favorite characters from film and books, or maybe she's a female reflection of Peter Parker. Most likely, she's bits and pieces of real women I've known in life. All I know is when I sat down to write the pitch, her words came out.

wouldn't have passed muster back in the '60s and '70s, it seems to click with people who have read the preview copy of issue #1. As for who I think does good dialogue, when it comes to comics, Brian Michael Bendis is King. I was also

CBM: As a writer, have you had any particular difficulties for you in writing a female lead?

Rosemann: I attempted to write character first. As in, what would Kat do in this situation, regardless of her sex. But truthfully, our gender can impact upon our decisions and behavior, so in that case I also bounce ideas off my truly talented wife, Alice Farrell (who was a definite inspiration for Kat). Because she works in the film world and is an amazing student of human behavior, Alice is very good with suggestions for female character bits. The rest is just experience and observation. I was almost a Gender Studies major in college and have always been interested in gender/sexuality issues, so I try and draw upon that as well. Hopefully the results will be authentic and entertaining.

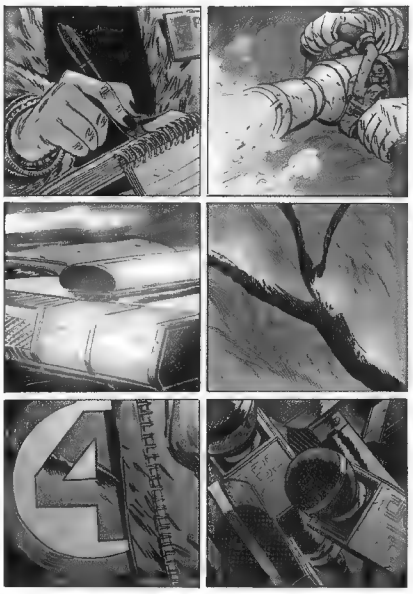
CBM: Did you have a physical description in mind for her that you gave to Guy or was the concept sketches portion of the creation done before he was involved?

Rosemann: I definitely had a visual for Kat in mind, but it was Guy who truly brought her to life. He and I talked about her image and what she would wear, and then Guy expanded upon that and added a great deal with body language and behavior (i.e. taking off her glasses to look better to Jimmy Lee, etc.). It was the last minute addition of the Tina Fey glasses that really gave her a distinct visual. I'm a firm believer in the fact that what we wear, how we cut our hair, how we present ourselves, etc., is a representation of ourselves and can be used to communicate facets of a character. Here's the description I gave

Guy: "Katherine 'Kat' Farrell: Kat is our main character, our street-level protagonist through which we see the strange, dangerous and wonderful world of Marvel's New York City. She should be sharp and independent, but not without her faults. She can be crass and biting, she's an extreme realist, and she often gets in over her head. She's also waging a losing battle against smoking. Hey, at least she's trying.

"Physically, she should resemble a young Winona Ryder, short hair and all—but let's give her dark scarlet hair. She has a fit body (small but strong), and a normal-sized chest—let's make her realistic. Very cute in an 'elfish' way, but not a traditional knockout. Basically, guys should think she's really cute, and girls shouldn't be intimidated by her. She always wears a silvery metallic overcoat. That will be her 'costume.' Underneath should be black jeans and black t-shirts with phrases like 'Cowgirl,' 'Rock Star' and 'Goddess' on them.

"All in all, she should be a firecracker, but likeable. She's independent and has strong opinions, but that doesn't make her a bitch. Think Rosalind Russell in *His Girl Friday*, or Katharine Hepburn in her various roles, but with a modern upgrade, of course."



CBM: The book is firmly planted in the Marvel Universe. The page design is clear and very accessible. The storytelling is easy to follow. The dialogue is great. Are you trying to sneak an actual comic book in on us or something?

Rosemann: Hey, I'm just following the mandate that EIC Joe Quesada has laid out: make the stories accessible, entertaining, and unique. If you haven't sampled some of the "new" Marvel, I strongly recommend *X-Force*, *Alias*, *Incredible Hulk*, *The Ultimates*, *Tangled Web*, *Ultimate X-Men*, *Ultimate Spider-Man*, *Cable*, *Amazing Spider-Man* and *New X-Men*.

CBM: Reading the first issue, it seems pretty evident that you probably have a lot more than one story to tell about her. If *Deadline* succeeds financially, what would your dream for it be?

Rosemann: I like to take things one step at a time. While I've been seeing a lot of positive reviews (that Guy and I are flattered by), I see this series barely squeaking by when it comes to sales—if it lands in the Top 100 we'll be lucky. And that's fine by me, because I'm happy just getting the chance to tell this story—not to mention getting the chance to work with someone of the caliber of Guy Davis. So if it makes a profit—and if Bill Jemas, Joe Quesada and Tom Brevoort are happy with the story—then I'd love to tell another tale with Kat. What really blows my mind is that Guy told me he'd love to do another story, too!

Deadline *#1 sold out in very short order. Deadline #2 is due as we go to press. The rest of the series will follow on the first week of each of the next two months.*

Collectable Character Statues

by Mike Wilbur

Diamond Select has a tough act to follow

Diamond Select following **Bowen Designs** producing statues and mini-busts of **Marvel Comics** characters is sort of like Roger Moore following Sean Connery as James Bond. Not an enviable position, but Moore ultimately made the role his own for a new generation of moviegoers. For me and my generation, Connery is THE Bond. For my younger brother and his generation, Moore is THE Bond. For a new generation, Pierce Brosnan is THE Bond.

The point is, for a variety of reasons, change happens. It's not inherently good or bad; it's simply change. In this case, Marvel Comics has elected not to renew their statue-producing contract with Bowen Designs, and instead turned to the team at Diamond Select Toys to do the job (see "Bowen's Marvel License Set to Expire" in *CBM* #90). Given the significant market success of Bowen's product offerings, DST has a daunting task ahead. But, if their first few Marvel releases and plethora of pre-production prototypes (take THAT, Stan Lee!) are any indication, they're definitely up to the challenge.

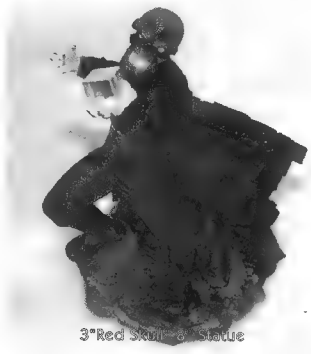
Employing a blend of industry-established sculptors and up-and-coming new talent, Diamond Select is poised for the attack with six distinct product lines.

The **Ultimate Busts** feature characters from the popular Ultimate Marvel comic book titles. Launched in February '02, the line began with **Storm** of the **X-Men**, followed in March '02 with X-Men arch-nemesis **Magneto**. Next up, in April and May '02, just in time for the eagerly anticipated Spider-Man movie, were the respective releases of **Spider-Man** and the **Green Goblin**. **Cyclops** and **Marvel Girl** of the X-Men are next on the schedule.

A second line of busts, dubbed "**Rogues Gallery**," and scheduled to begin in June '02, features, as the name would suggest, the long parade of super-villains who have appeared in the pages of the various titles of the primary Marvel Universe. Starting with several of the foes of Spider-Man, releases begin with **The Lizard**, followed by **The Sandman**, **Kraven the Hunter** and others to be named later.

Both the Ultimate busts and the Rogues Gallery busts are planned as monthly series.

A third line of busts, the **Marvel Universe**, is the place for all the Marvel characters not covered by the other two lines. Beginning in July '02 with the release of the Marvel Universe (not the Wesley Snipes movie) version of **Blade**, the Marvel Universe busts have a planned bi-monthly release schedule.



The Red Skull, issued in March '02, initiated a line of **8" Statues**. The Red Skull is also part of a subset of statues featuring the heroes of the **Avengers** paired with their most famous foes. His adversary of over five decades, the legendary **Captain America**, will follow later in the year. The next release in the line, **Thor** is scheduled for July '02, beginning the intended monthly release schedule.

A second subset of the 8" Statues will feature the original early '60s version of the X-Men. These will begin late in 2002, and be released on an alternating schedule with the Avengers subset.

For comparison purposes, DST's 8" Statues are rendered in 1:9 scale, while Bowen's Marvel statues are sculpted in the slightly larger 1:8 scale. Bowen's "mini-statues" are produced in a scale of 1:10.

The final two product lines, projected to begin late in 2002, are **Full-Size Statues** and **High-End Collectibles**.

The statues are pretty much self-explanatory. The High-End Collectibles will consist of items such as props, snowglobes, resin. bookends, and any other pieces that defy simple categorization. These two series will be released on an alternating monthly basis.

According to Eric Lyga, Marketing and Sales Coordinator for Diamond Select, the DST design staff made a conscious and deliberate effort to render their offerings unique, and easily distinguishable from the Marvel-licensed products of the competition.

Whereas Randy Bowen chose to produce his busts in the classical "artsy" style (a static pose with the character's head atop a wedge of torso), DST favors "action poses," with the intent, as Lyga phrases it, to "capture a comic book frame and put it in 3-D." Also, instead of a more generic sort of base, DST employs bases that are thematically keyed to the characters perched on them. Sandman's grainy base of animated sand flows and merges with his body. The Lizard bursts out of a sewer grate. Kraven's base is composed of jungle plants and an array of primitive flint-headed spears. The Ultimate X-Men busts are unified in their common use of their book's logo as a base.

Limited edition runs have been a standardized **10,000** pieces for the first several releases in the Ultimates line, with production of only **500** pieces for variant editions. Each of the Ultimate busts has two variant editions. One type of variant, labeled as "Special Edition," is exclusive to the direct market, and features color variations or "battle damage." The second type of variant is produced exclusively for sale through mass-market outlets such as **Tower Records**. These variants usually feature actual differences in sculpting details, such as the addition of a jacket to the Ultimate Marvel Girl bust.

Ultimate "Green Goblin" Bust

Rogues Gallery "Lizard" Bust

Ultimate "Marvel Girl" Bust

Rogues Gallery "Sandman" Bust

Ultimate "Spider-Man" Bust

"Thor" 8" Statue

Rogues Gallery "Kraven" Bust

Ultimate "Wolverine" Bust

As releases progress, edition sizes will become more flexible, and keyed to the relative popularity of each character.

Retail prices for all pieces so far have been solidly under $100. **Regular Edition** busts range from $45 to $55, with **Special Editions** in the $70 to $75 range. Price spread to date for the **8" Statues** is $75 to $85. Prices are not yet officially set for the forthcoming Full-Size Statues or High-End Collectibles.

I had the opportunity to view a large assortment and variety of proof copies and prototypes of upcoming releases, many of which I'm not at liberty to divulge as yet. What I've seen is an impressive and exciting selection of products that may, years from now, have collectors debating the merits of Bowen vs. Diamond Select, just as James Bond fans now debate Connery vs. Moore.

Comics2Film Digest

by Rob Worley

IN PRODUCTION

It's a busy year for comic book movies. In addition to four major releases—*Blade II*, *Spider-Man*, *Men In Black 2* and *Road To Perdition*—cameras are rolling on four more features for next year.

Bulletproof Monk went into production March 9 in Toronto. It's based on the Flypaper Press comic of the same name. Chow Yun-Fat (*Crouching Tiger*) plays a mysterious monk charged with the task of protecting an ancient scroll. Seann William Scott (best known as Stiffler from the *American Pie* movies) becomes his unlikely protégé. They are aided by a sexy Russian mafia princess called Bad Girl (played by James King). Music video director Paul Hunter directs.

Ron Perlman from **Blade II**.

Also, Marvel's *Daredevil* started rolling cameras on March 25th in Los Angeles. Joining the previously announced cast of Ben Affleck (Daredevil), Jennifer Garner (Elektra), Michael Clarke Duncan (The Kingpin) and Colin Farrell (Bullseye) are Jon Favreau (*Made*) who plays Matt Murdock's friend and law partner Foggy Neslon, David Keith (*Behind Enemy Lines*) as Murdock's single father, beleaguered prizefighter Jack 'The Devil' Murdock and relative newcomer Scott Terra (*Eight Legged Freaks*) as Matt Murdock at age twelve. Kevin Smith is also rumored to have a cameo in the film.

Also in production is *The Hulk* for Universal. Filming on that one also began in late March.

HELLBOY

Blade II director Guillermo del Toro told "Comics2Film" that, if he has his way, his next movie will be Mike Mignola's *Hellboy*. The film has long been a pet project of the director. "I don't care what comes out this year, *Spider-Man* or *Blade II*, I want to make *Hellboy* the best comic book movie ever," Del Toro said.

He and Mignola are also adamant that Ron Perlman (who appeared in *Blade II*) be cast in the title role. "Mike has a really clear concept of how Hellboy walks and talks...and to his ear and to his eye [Perlman] is the actor to do it, so I'd rather stick to my guns and do it that way."

Perlman told "C2F" that he's thrilled that Del Toro has such faith in him. "It's a phenomenal project. The adaptation that Guillermo wrote based on the comic book just

Wayne Barlow's concept art for the **Hellboy** movie, circa 1999. © Larry Gordon Productions

Wesley Snipes and Guillermo Del Toro on the set of **Blade II**.

totally nails it," Perlman said. "That would be huge fun to play that character and a great honor because he's a phenomenal super-hero."

The producers of *Hellboy* have contracted make-up F/X guru Rick Baker (*Men In Black 2*) to work on designs for the main character. Del Toro told us that, should the movie get greenlit, Richard Corben, Mike Mignola and Wayne Barlowe would also do creature design for the movie. Phil Tippet's Tippet Studios would do the CGI effects. At the time of this writing the movie still did not have a studio, but the buzz indicates that may change by the time this column is published.

BLADE III

Blade II did well at the box office, opening at the number one spot. If the figures are good enough New Line will likely go forward with a third installment. The players from the second film are eager to jump back in for part three.

"I've always had in mind an idea for the third one that takes it into really uncharted territory," screenwriter and executive producer David Goyer told "C2F." "What I really want to do for the third one is set it about 20 years in the future and the vampires have actually completely taken over the world, so they are the status quo. In all these different stories the vampires are trying to take over the world. For the third film I just want to say, 'f*** it' they've won. Now what is the world like?"

Director Guillermo Del Toro told us he's also interested. "I would love to be involved in that one if the premise we're proposing is accepted," Del Toro said. "That would be really attractive to me. Otherwise I don't want to do another semi-urban movie with martial arts and all that."

Blade III writer/producer David Goyer.

ASTRONAUTS IN TROUBLE

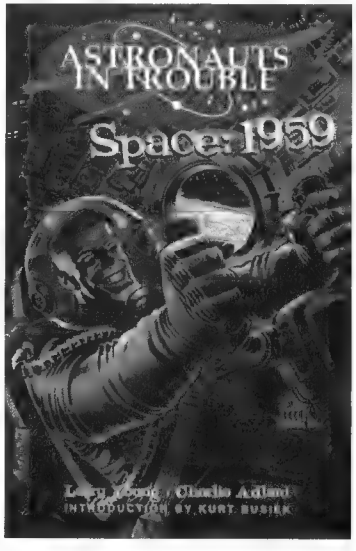
Producer/screenwriter/comic creator Peter Lenkov (*Tracker*) told "Comics2Film" that he and Arsenal Entertainment are developing Larry Young's *Astronauts In Trouble* as a feature film. Ian Unterreiner of Arsenal Entertainment is attached to develop/produce the project in association with Young and attorney Kenneth F. Levin. The project is still in the early stages, but Lenkov tells us they hope to begin pitching it to studios soon.

Lenkov has also finished the latest rewrite on the screenplay based on his *R.I.P.D.* comic. The comic tells the story of afterworld cops who keep the earth safe from supernatural threats. "[Producers] Larry Gordon and Lloyd Levin have given the script to an actor we all think would be great for the part," Lenkov told "C2F," "so we're keeping our fingers crossed."

MESS O' MARVEL MOVIES

In a March conference call for Marvel Enterprises investors, Marvel Studios head Avi Arad talked about the company's various Hollywood dealings. "Studios are clamoring for our properties," Arad told investors.

It's no surprise that a sequel to Sony's *Spider-Man* was already in the planning stages. Arad confirmed that director Sam Raimi and both stars, Tobey Maguire and Kirsten Dunst, would return for the follow-up. Cameras could roll on *Spider-Man 2* as early as January, 2003.



Astronauts in Trouble.

From **Spider-Man** trailer.

Arad also commented that *Blade 3* is already in the works and *Hulk 2* is even being discussed for a May 2005 release.

BIRDS OF PREY

Rumor has it that the WB network is keen to go forward with a series based on DC's *Birds of Prey* comic. The same people who brought us *Smallville* filmed a pilot movie this year. The movie stars Dina Meyer (*Starship Troopers*) as Oracle, Ashley Scott (*Dark Angel*) as The Huntress and Rachel Skarsten (*Angels in the Infield*) as a young Black Canary.

The latest rumor is that Mark Hamill performs some voice acting in the pilot as well. GothamClockTower.com states that Hamill is cast as a character identified only as "voice from shadows." However, a careful read from the pilot script reveals that the character is an allusion to The Joker, a character that Hamill has voiced on the *Batman* animated show, as well as in the *Batman Beyond* movie.

CHILLER

Producer David Engel told "Comics2Film" that he's working to develop a movie version of James Hudnall's comic *Chiller*. Screenwriter Bill Massa (who previously sold a script called *Droid*, about a futuristic serial killer, to Silver Pictures) is working on the pitch for the movie. Engel describes *Chiller* as Harry Potter meets XXX. It follows a magician who gets embroiled in a centuries old conspiracy. James Hudnall's comic features art by John Ridgeway and is available as a trade paperback from Image Comics.

SHORT TAKES

•Neil Patrick Harris (*Doogie Howser*) has been cast as the lead voice in the *Spider-Man* animated show. Lisa Loeb is voicing Mary Jane Watson. Ian Ziering (*Beverly Hills 90210*) voices Harry Osborn and Ethan Embry (*Can't Hardly Wait*) will be the first villain.

•McG (*Charlie's Angels*) and J.J. Abrams (*Alias*) have been hired on as the director and writer respectively on the *Superman* movie. The pair are developing an entirely new take on the franchise and discarding the "Death of Superman" storyline that previous filmmakers had worked with.

•Tim McCanlies (*The Iron Giant*) and Guillermo Del Toro (*The Devil's Backbone*) are working on a treatment for the movie version of Oni Press' comic *The Coffin*. James Cameron (*Titanic*) is producing.

•Steve Niles (*Fused*) and Todd McFarlane (*Spawn*) have turned in the latest draft of the *Spawn 2* script for Columbia Pictures.

•*Ghost World* didn't win an Oscar but it did win the "Best First Screenplay" and "Best Supporting Male" at the 2002 IFP/West Independent Spirit Awards.

•Casey Silver Productions has picked up the option to develop Brian Haberlin's *Area 52* as a feature film.

•Janet Scott Batchler and Lee Batchler have been hired to write *My Name Is Modesty*, a screenplay based on Peter O'Donnell's classic comic strip *Modesty Blaise*.

•Hans Rodionoff (*Skulls 2*) turned in a new draft of Marvel's *Man-Thing* movie earlier this year.

The Michael Naiman Report
Strange But True

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call "The Comicbook Twilight Zone." (Thanks, Uncle Rod!) Here dwells the unusual, odd and inexplicable. I submit (once again) for your approval the strange case of Uncle Scrooge #179.All of comicdom is aware of my promotion, pandering and pimping of the scarce and rare Uncle Scrooge #179—the toughest issue to find in the whole run. My guesstimate today is that there are fewer than 30 issues, worldwide, in people's collections. eBay has been largely responsible for making more issues available to those willing to pay for them. However, it appears as if we have reached the point of diminishing returns on value. Or have we?

Case in point. A recent attempt to sell a slabbed issue of #179 on eBay (#1085043136) met with abject failure. It was the first #179 to be graded by CGC. The opening bid was $700. At the end of the sale—not one bid. Yet, two other non-high grade issues sold for $215 in FN condition (1.91X Guide) and $356 in FN/VF (1.81X Guide). Near Mint issues have sold in the past—a couple for over $1,200—but those willing to pay for those you can count on Django Reinhardt's left hand. Those sales occurred over two years ago. Since then, the realized prices on near mint issues have slid significantly as a multiple of Guide. There are those willing to pay for non-near mint issues as indicated by the above-mentioned sales.

The Grail Discovered: I am pleased to report that there has been a documented sale of the only known copy of Uncle Scrooge #179 still sealed in its original Whitman 3pack. This was not an eBay sale. The sales price was $900…2X Guide for a NM copy. Not bad for the only known example in existence! Bagged sets of Uncle Scrooge books are still very difficult to locate. The earliest example of an unopened 3pack I am aware of contains issue #103 (Feb 1973?). Anyone have an earlier set? Let me know.

While we're "Talking Ducks," it continues to amaze me how the Internet has allowed the comic collecting business to reach global proportions. Back in 1986 Bruce Hamilton and Another Rainbow issued a hardcover 10 Volume 30 issue set of the Carl Barks Library. This reprinted in black and white, all of Carl's work along with insightful expert commentary. These slipcased volumes weighed in at a good 10+ pounds each, which probably restricted them from being shipped to overseas sales points. This prevented the huge duck collector base in Europe from obtaining these remarkable tomes. Last month I had the opportunity to sell multiple volumes of the CBL. Guess where they went? Denmark, Finland Portugal, Germany and Canada! These collectors are paying between $125-200 for these over the Internet. And that's not counting freight or customs! Very strong market for these!

Another great group of books are the later volumes of the first printings in the Marvel Masterworks series. These can go for between $75-$100+ for sealed (and unsealed) volumes. I haven't seen as strong a showing (yet) with the DC archives…but their time is coming. Both are good looking additions to anyone's bookcase collections. Who can afford to purchase original issues anymore?

Another not-so-surprising group of sales goodies and/or bargains are the Marvel superhero paper ephemera items. There's some great artwork in the Marvel Fun Books. The stationery kits, iron-on transfers, Marvel cello buttons and pennants. Look for the Spider-Man and Captain America items to make an upward move in the next Hake's Price Guide to Character Toy Premiums.

Variant Vagrancy: Let's take another gander at what's going on in this corner of the collecting world. Tomb of Dracula 35¢ variants have been laid out and slabbed. Sink your teeth into this sale! Issues #58 (VR 8.0 CGC), #59 (VF 7.5 CGC) and #60 (VF+ 8.5 CGC) found the Prince of Darkness fetching the grand sum of $800.00 for the group. This translates to 44X Guide! Non-Slabbed variant sales include: Invaders #7 (30¢ variant) VG $75 (20X Guide); Marvel Two-In-One #15 (30¢ variant) FN $110 (33.33X Guide), and Spectacular Spider-Man #7 FN/VF (35¢ variant) $225 (just over 35X Guide)

Market reporter Joe Serpico reports the discovery of what might be the Original Slabbed Comic. Joe explains to CBM readers, "Imagine your favorite comic cover beautifully etched on to a slab of granite. These laser etched cover recreations are one of the most innovative and spectacular forms of cover art reproduction. The cover art/photos are taken through an eight-step process that results in a granite etched rendition of the original. You can choose from sizes ranging from 6"x6"x1/2" to over 24"x24"x1/2" with the original faithfully reproduced down to the finest detail. The cost for these beautiful granite reproductions is only $150 plus shipping for sizes up to 12"x12"x1/2".

Here's how it works: 1) Your cover art/picture is scanned into the image editing software. This is done twice in order to achieve optimum color. 2) The photo is then converted to gray scale. 3) Next the photo is sized to the required dimensions, 6x6, 12x6,12x12, 18x18, 24x24, etc. (the image will stay the same without any dpi loss) 4) Next the photo is enhanced and modified as necessary to produce the best quality rendition. At this point any custom text can be added to the picture. 5) A tone map of the image is then created to enhance the gray scale forward ground, mid ground and background. 6) After this is done the image is saved as a bitmap file and opened in another program which further enhances it. 7) The new program shows

CBM MarketWatch

A report of market indicator sales (including % of Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide) by Michael Naiman

Aces High
#3 GD $6.66 74%
#36 VG- $240 85%
#43 VG- $260 1.12X
#45 VG $240 1.03X

Adventure
#47 VG- $425 49%
#282 FN- $54 86%

All American
#73 GD $145 2.13X

Amazing Spider-Man
#7 GD $60 76%
#8 VF $495 77%
#14 GD $105 70%
#17 VF+ $400 88%
#19 NM- $325 81%
#19 VG $44 66%
#39 VF+ $250 1.43X
#40 VF- $275 1.1X
#41 VF+ $240 1.5X
#41 FN $38 56%
#47 FN+ $19 56%
#50 FN+ $150 1.22X
#51 VF $70 55%
#86 VF+ $36 1.13X
#87 VF+ $27 85%

Archie
#10 VG $124 71%
#10 VG+ $199 1.14X

Avengers
#57 FN $23 Guide
#93 VF+ $77 1.86X
#100 VF- $41 81%

Batman
#67 VG- $62 51%
#209 VF- $15 82%

Batman Annual
#7 FN+ $27 90%

Captain America
#59 VG $600 1.02X
#110 VF- $29 70%
#111 VF+ $36 87%
#113 VF- $27 65%

Chamber of Chills
#24 FN $80 1.06X

Classics Illustrated
#66 (1st Ed) FN $51 61%
#74 (1st Ed.) FN $42 41%

Creepy
#1 NM $50 50%

Crime SuspenStories
#22 GD $27 1.42X%
#25 FN $32 89%

Daredevil
#50 VF $14 86%
#52 VF+ $16 98%

Fantastic Four
#48 NM- $865 82%
#49 VF $106 60%

Fight
#50 FN $54 78%
#53 VG+ $45 1.13X

Fighting Yank
#20 GD $26 52%

Flash (GA)
#9 GD $212 70%
#10 VG $450 74%

Flash (SA)
#151 VF $76 92%

Four Color (Bambi's Childm)
#30 FN $128 79%

Frontline Combat
#12 VG+ $22 97%

Green Lantern
#5 FN $84 90%
#6 FN- $79 90%
#9 FN- $54 79%
#40 VF $266 79%
#59 NM $182 83%

Hanna-Barbera Bandwagon
#1 FN $31 89%

House of Mystery
#145 FN $16 84%
#147 VF- $31 70%

House of Secrets
#92 VF- $155 42%

Hulk
#103 VF $45 79%
#108 VF+ $41 99%
#180 VF $60 1.05X

Justice League of America
#26 FN $29 85%
#28 VF $61 77%
#31 VF $57 75%
#32 VF+ $57 1.06X
#50 NM $55 Guide
#109 NM $13 87%

Joker Comics
#1 VG $338 73%

Jungle
#106 FN $34 64%
#118 VF $76 85%
#122 VF $77 86%

Marvel Tales
#1 FN+ $54 62%

Master
#37 FN+ $172 99%
#51 FN $107 1.62X

Millie the Model
#153 NM $25 Guide

Modern Comics
#70 VG $46 70%

More Fun
#100 FN $295 85%

Nick Fury
#1 VF $41 59%
#2 VF $27 85%
#3 VF $22 69%

Northwest Mounties
#2 VF+$60 27%

Our Army at War
#6 GD $82 2.05X
#242 VF $71 1.4X

Panic
#1 GD $18 1.8X
#2 GD $8 1.25X

Piracy
#2 VG+ $27 98%

Planet
#2 FN $1300 1.06X
#20 GD $180 1.36X
#38 GD $154 2.03X

Rangers
#43 VG+ $40 1.06X

Rawhide Kid
#22 GD $38 2.45X
#23 VG $41 1.08X

Sensation
#14 VF $495 83%
#23 VG+ $118 80%
#64 VG+ $81 1.01X
#86 VG $105 1.53X

Silver Surfer
#1 VF $247 76%
#4 VF $229 76%

Spellbound
#27 VG+ $32 94%

Strange Tales
#129 VF $40 1.14X
#135 FN+ $36 1.09X
#151 VF+ $29 76%

Sub-Mariner (SA)
#3 VF $18 71%
#4 VF $18 71%
#6 VF $15 67%
#7 VF $15 67%
#9 VF+ $16 72%

Superman
#11 VG $700 1.66X
#61 VG $220 83%
#76 GD $179 1.07X

Swamp Thing
#1 VF+ $115 1.5X

Tales from the Crypt
#20 GD $178 1.7X
#27 VG $59 74%
#44 FN $99 94%

Tales of Suspense
#46 FN+ $63 93%

The Thing
#12 GD $90 1.13X
#14 GD $90 1.10X

Tower of Shadows
#5 NM $28 1.17X

Vault of Horror
#30 GD $50 1.92X
#31 VG $57 1.10X
#36 FN- $40 51%

Weird Horrors
#9 FN- $200 1.66X

Weird Science
#7 FN $90 68%
#8 VG+ $54 61%
#10 VG+ $66 75%
#18 VG+ $59 91%
#19 VG+ $80 95%

Wonder Woman
#15 GD $255 2.55X
#16 VG $203 Guide
#72 GD $89 2.97X

World's Finest
#105 VG $25 83%

Wow
#24 VG $37 66%

X-Men
#1 GD $477 85%
#50 VF+ $54 Guide
#53 FN $19 82%
#94 VF+ $360 79%

Zip Comics
#1 GD+ $385 49%

Zoo Funnies
#10 FN $10.5 40%

Zoot
#11 VG+ $158 1.16X
#13 VG $76 81%

how the image will look on the piece of stone before it is made. This is a quick three-step process. 8) This process takes from ten minutes to over eight hours, depending on the size of the etching."

Sounds like a great idea for those planning ahead for their final resting place, eh? Can you imagine your favorite superhero standing over you for All of Eternity?

MARKET REPORTS

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Extremely high grade CGC-graded books keep shattering records and defying logic. I personally like the fact that people are focusing on the high-grade stuff because that means there is less interest in the **lower grade** area, especially in the Golden Age market. You can find some really nice scarce items on the Internet and at shows usually priced for much less than Guide. Because they are only in "VG" or "Fine" grades they are passed over. One must continue to remember that this is a worldwide market now and that quite a few people have just tapped into this phenomena known as comic books.

High-grade CGC books are a much safer bet for sure for the investor collector, but for a regular comic book person to get a copy of certain items in any condition is still a **great thrill**. Those of us who either live in, or can travel to, larger metropolitan areas where there are many more comic book stores and monthly conventions are definitely jaded on the common item. We see more books on a regular basis and sometimes forget how incredulous a feeling it is when given the chance to buy a book that seemed at one time just a pipe dream.

I recently found a New Adventure Comics #12 at an antique show and was delighted to have the chance to buy it. I showed it to a couple of comic people after buying it and one of the guys said "It has a split on the spine, it's only a VG or so." I asked him to tell me the last time he saw a nicer copy for sale. His reply was that he never had, but it is **not a hot book** and not in great shape. Hot? Compared to what, Spider-Man? I can get all of the Spider-Man I want any day of the week. But this book was a real score. I have since looked through the book a few times and have sent it to CGC for grading and protection by getting it slabbed. If I get a VG or close I will be very happy! I will place it in a box with my Yellow Kid Magazine Number Four from 1897—unfortunately it is only a Fair or so!

What's a guy to do? I don't know of any warehouse finds of pre-hero or turn of the century comics, so I guess I will take what I can get. It is the **thrill of the hunt** that makes this hobby fun for me, whether on the Internet, convention floor or digging through boxes at antique and collectible malls.

Some Sales: Adventure #99 FN/VF $350, #437 CGC 9.8 $200, #438 CGC 9.8 $200, #440 CGC 9.8 $500; Batman #17 VF- $1500; More Fun #104 FN+ $350; Detective #87 VF $700, #55 GD/VG $200, #78 FN/VF $500; Captain Marvel #16 VF $600, #9 VG/FN $200, #18 VF- $400, #8 FN/VF $600; Action #74 FN/VF $350, #59 FN $400; Punch #9 FN/VF $500; Spy Smasher #8 FN/VF $300; Fight #28 VF $200; Whiz #25 VG/FN $850; Captain Marvel Jr #3 VG 200, #5 VG 150, #7 VG/FN $175; Wow #11 $300; Master #23 FN $1100; Eerie #4 FN 150.

Tom Gordon

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The comic book market is moving along at an amazing pace. Just when you think you have seen an amazing **record price**, it seems that it just has to be broken on a consistent basis. The upcoming auctions by Heritage Comics and MastroNet should be truly awesome as both auctions are offering an enormous amount of quality material. With books like Action Comics #1 CGC 7.5 and the Wonder Woman #1 Ashcan it will be truly interesting to see where the market goes from here. If all the previous sales are taken into account it appears that the market is moving faster then a speeding bullet!

Platinum Age comics are continuing to sell when the supply is available. These books continue to be very difficult to locate in any grade. To date we have only seen two very high grade CGC-graded Platinum Age comics. We recently saw a Buster Brown's Experiences with Pond's Extract (nn) 1904 CGC VF+ 8.5 offered. It will be interesting to see how the marketplace responds to high-grade Platinum Age comics. An 8.0 is the highest grade in the Guide for a Platinum Age book and this is equal to a 9.4 in any other comic.

Gold and Silver Age books are moving well overall. We are seeing some slowing to mid-grade Silver Age comics. The current market seems to be split between the high-grade and the low-grade collector. Some have said that they would rather save a little money and buy the lower-grade comic as they can buy a larger number of books for the amount of money.

CGC books are continuing to move well. Gold, Silver, and Bronze always move very well in the high-grade range. We are still seeing amazing prices for many books. It seems that just when you think you know where the market is going it continues to surprise us all. We have also seen collectors who have realized that some books will not turn up or be available in top grades. These collectors are wisely purchasing books in the highest grades that are available. CGC has been very good with turnaround times since their move to Florida and continues to do rather well with the "Monumental Task" they have taken on.

I recently received back several books that I had **restored**. I have to say that they were very well done. The one book had amazing results, as it was a difference of night and day from its previous condition. If you buy restored books it seems that many times you come across a nice looking restored book, but it has a technical flaw. Many times amateur work tends to leave out some of the important factors of restoration especially those that keep the work stable.

Character Toys and Premiums are selling well as usual. The new edition of Hake's Price Guide to Character Toy Premiums, which will be out in June, should give us all something to spend countless hours looking over. The new Guide will include many more items and categories than the past editions, which is always amazing. We are seeing some decreases in radio premium prices, specifically the more common items in lower grade. These types of collectibles seem to have come out of hiding now that the Internet has opened the flood gates. Time will tell how the growing availability of some items will affect their values. Premiums across the board have continued to sell very well with the rare and unusual leading the way.

Toys and Action Figures continue to sell well if fairly priced. We are seeing some real interest in the upcoming Star Wars and Spider-Man movies, which may translate into sales for related collectibles. The new Star Wars pre-view figures line sells well, but many of the figures are turning up in less than stellar packages. It appears that the cards for the figures are rather easily damaged in the cases during shipping. Vintage Star Wars continues to sell well, but the prices have come down slightly as certain pieces have become easier to locate. The Internet has created an interesting issue with some items as it is no longer the issue of scarcity in one's local area,

but more the cost of purchasing the item online.

Michael Tierney

Collector's Edition
North Little Rock, Arkansas

At Collector's Edition we're celebrating our 20th year in business, and I don't know if this is a result of the various promotional campaigns I've had going, but interest in comics seems to be up overall. Hopefully this is a cumulative result of many different elements within the industry converging into a break out type of year.

There is a lot going on: It's late March as I write this, and **Spider-Man Movie Fever** has finally arrived. The movie itself won't be out until May, but this month saw the first sales of Silver Age Amazing Spider-Man comics to customers whose interest was sparked by buzz for the movie.

A few **Amazing S-M Sales** were: #39 (Green Goblin ID revealed) VG+ 45, #52 FN+ $27, #74 FN+ $29.95, #90 (Death of Capt. Stacy) VF+ $32, #91 VF+ $18, #92 VF+ $33, #110 (1st Gibbon) VF+ $18.50, #124 (1st Man-Wolf) VF+ $37, #129 (1st Punisher) VF+$140, #135 (2nd full Punisher) VF $22.50; Special #8 FN $14.50; King Size #9 VF+ $19.

That's a lot, especially when you consider that last month we didn't sell a single old Spider-Man comic. While I am still critical of many of Marvel President Bill Jemas' policies, his hiring of Joe Quesada as Editor-In-Chief is proving to be his best move. Marvel Comics seems to be finally coming out of a ten-year coma.

Other examples are multiple **Iron Man Sales:** #1 VG $56, #2 FN $29.50, #2 FN+ $33.50, #3 FN+ $27, #3 VF $29.75, #4 FN+ $27, #4 FN $24.70, #5 VF+ $24.50, #5 VF $22.75, #6 FN+ $25, #6 FN 22.75, #7 FN+ $24, #7 FN $22.70, #9 FN $14, #10 FN+ $14, #10 VF+ $22.50.

DC continues to be strong in both new and older comics. We sold another run of Silver Age Superman, issues #203 through #217. A strong launch of the new Hawkman series resulted in the sale of Hawkman #8 VF+ $41.

Japanese Manga continues to bring new women customers into the store, which is our strongest growth area. There are many times that I'm the only male in the store.

Another recent growth area, **CGC books**, has definitely slacked off. Despite my assurances to the contrary, customers seemed convinced that CGC-graded books are being manipulated by another industry magazine. Consumer confidence in impartiality is crucial to this type of endeavor, so the concerns of slanted grading for volume customers is a key issue that should be addressed before it's too late. Chuck Rozanski of Mile High Comics has expressed concerns over the grading scale of Golden Age comics being the same as Modern comics, making top grade Golden Age books impossible to achieve. Some retooling of CGC might still be in order, but if this is the worst thing I can be critical about, I'd say 2002 could be a turnaround year for the industry

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Business continues to revolve around profits realized from a mixture of new and old comics. **Back issue sales** fluctuate between Silver Age, Bronze and Modern. Golden Age seems confined to a hardcore fan base with particular wants. Silver Age involves the sales of DCs and Marvels, almost exclusively. Bronze Age is heavily laden with Marvel sales. Modern Comics continue to include just about everything Marvel and DC put out in the last decade. Marvel and DC are currently adding new life to such characters as Howard the Duck, Cage, Doom Patrol, Deadman and Suicide Squad. These **"reboots"** are creating back-issue interest in the older versions, as well as other, second-tier characters of the past. The frontline, title characters—Batman, Green Lantern, Hulk, Spider-Man, etc.—are selling well back to the Bronze Age. Marvels tend to reach further back in time in popularity for us. We're happy to see an increase in the volume of new comics sold through our store. If our sales are an indication of sales across the country then the retail comic book business is definitely strong!

We are seeing an increase in the frequency of **on-line buyers** shopping on our website for interesting comics. Unfortunately, they are then moving across the on-line spectrum for similar items at lower prices. Smart buying, but less productive for us. Some shoppers will ask for personal scans of both covers of particular books (even CGC books). Taking those scans they patiently wait on **eBay** for a similar book in similar grade to pop up for sale at a lower price. Comparing the two comics—we lose the sale due to price. Still, smart shopping. But those buyers that try to take advantage of our good nature will find that we will only partake in this venture once. We still have an overhead to meet that surpasses the monthly bills on-line dealers must pay.

We like having our store and so do our customers. There are plenty of walk-in and on-line shoppers that require a service like ours. Hands-on, back-issue comic book "dinosaurs," like us, will survive. So don't be surprised if we, or other stores, cut off activity for a shopper price-comparing, but not spending.

Golden Age Sales: Airboy V7/8 VG $30; Annie Oakley #5 VG- $30; Apache Kid #16 FN $22.50; Baffling Mysteries #17 FN+ $72; Battlefront #1 VG+ $50; Crime and Punishment #1 CGC 8.0 VF $270; Donald Duck FC #62 G/VG $231; Flyboy #1 FN $48; Gunsmoke Western #50 VG+ $22; Ibis the Invincible #3 FN $186; Racket Squad #16 FN $30; Tom Corbett Space Cadet FC #400 FN $27; Weird Science #7 VG/F $102; Wonder Woman #67 VG $70.

Silver Age Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #25 FN+ $82, #57 FN $21, #65 VF+ $42 , #68 FN/VF $30; Batman #173 FN $16.50, #200 CGC 8.5 VF+ $90; Chip N' Dale FC #517 FN+ $25; Incredible Hulk #118 VF- $16; Journey Into Mystery #78 FN- $65; Justice League of America #7 FN+ $81, #8 FN $70, #9 FN $107, #17 VF+ $135; Navy Action #1 VG/F $42; Night Nurse #4 VF $45; Star Trek #2 CGC 9.0 VF/NM $306; Strange Tales #97 FN+ $250; Tales of Suspense #35 VF $145, #39 VG/F $775; Tales to Astonish #59 FN $45; X-Men #15 FN $76, #24 F/VF $47, #54 VF- $36.

BRONZE AGE: Amazing Spider-Man #115 VF+ $25, #116 VF $25, #119 VF+ $38; Flash #224 NM $10; Night Nurse #4 VF $45.

Scott McAdam

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As long as I have held out from participating in the **"CGC"** business, I need to now. I picked up **1500+ books** from 1967 to 1977 in beautiful shape. I have so far, out of just 3.5 of 7 boxes, picked 91 books to send in to CGC. I see people selling books in 8 5 and 9.0 on eBay, but I have only picked out books that I believe will get 9.2 or better. These books include a run of Amazing Spider-Man #55-215 missing very few and only a few are less than Very Fine. FF #68-225 with a few missing and only few less that VF. Sub-Mariner 1-72; Hulk 102-260; Conan 1-140; Tarzan 207-258; Avengers 116-140; Silver Surfer 2, 8-18; Kamandi 1-58; Marvel Team-Up 1-105; Marvel-Two in-One 2 75 and more Marvels and DCs. Many, Many HIGH-GRADE Gold Key issues like Turok, Magnus, Tarzan, Korak [and DC], Space Family Robinson. Only a few 12 cent cover Gold Key but many 15-30 centers in great shape, some Near Mint.

No other real big things to report. Marvels and DCs continue to sell pretty well at 50% off retail. Miscellaneous '50s and '60s books

always move well to the right crowd. Almost any kind of comic will sell if you offer the right discount on it.

Bruce Ellsworth

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Tales from the road.

Flea Marketing is a great way to not only sell merchandise, but pick it up too! This week I was approached by an old woman who wanted to sell me her four-book comic collection. In her "collection" were two books I had never seen. One was a "Destination Moon" program, which was handed out at the New York premiere of the film. It had no ads or indicia. She had seen the movie in NY and kept it all these years. The other book was a giveaway comic by GE which had the title "Adventures into the Atom." This is probably from the '50s. It had 16 pages, no date or indicia. Also in her collection was a Strange Adventures #1 and a Fawcett Movie Comics #2, both featuring "Destination Moon"! Quite a find for a slow Saturday.

I attended the **Heritage Auction** on March 15th-16th and was astounded by the Silver Age market. Not only were there massive multiples of Guide on the key issues, but some of the late '60s Mad magazines sold at 30x Guide with no CGC certification!

Golden Age comics did fairly well especially Timely and key DCs. The original art market was alive and well with mostly Silver Age covers and pages selling for record prices.

Sales: Amazing Spider-Man #4 GD $150, #7 FN 6.0 $300, #18 VF+ $500, #28 VF $400; Avengers #4 FN $375; Batman #16 GD $350; Detective #298 FN $58; House of Mystery #s 2, 4, and 5 all GD $200; Journey into Mystery #s 11, 12 and 15 VG- $300; Suspense #3 FA/GD $3700; Four Color #16 VG (R) $900; Jo-Jo #17 GD $100; Giant Size X-Men #1 VF $400.

Joseph Serpico

Classic Comic Investments
www.classiccomicinvestments.com

It is late March, and it looks as though here in the northeast, we may have had our mildest winter in memory. That was probably good for most businesses, including the comics arena. Convention time is almost here, and things should start heating up, figuratively, and literally.

Speaking of time, the **Time Machine movie** was a dud—it did nothing for comic memorabilia sales. We are all eagerly awaiting the Spider-Man movie. Sales of almost anything Spider-Man are very hot in most grades, high grades sell better. I even sold a roll of old Spider-Man toilet paper, in Near Mint condition (good thing, that grade). It seems high-grade books, especially CGC-graded, are still fetching record or near record prices.

Artwork continues to escalate, it has not yet found its level.

I thought an interesting subject to put on paper would be **dealer-customer relations**. I think the general rule of thumb for a collector-customer would be a policy of building a relationship with a select number of dealers, as their primary source, and use many dealers as a secondary source of material. I try to remain loyal to those who have been good to me, at least to some extent, all business strategies being equal. I appreciate it and benefit when a dealer calls me to give me a chance to purchase some books from a fresh new collection, and I feel as if I owe that dealer at least a first chance to make an offer on books I may be selling, at some point in time.

I enjoy a relationship with customers who sometimes give me the **courtesy of trust**, and naturally I need to do likewise. I want to feel as if any deal I am making, either as buyer or seller, is a win-win proposition. I know that way we can continue to do repeat business. I like to sell, but I don't like to high pressure, because I know I very much don't like when it happens to me. I enjoy conversing with others about comics and many subjects, more so when the conversation is even and balanced. Who doesn't? There is enough money to be made legitimately, why risk tarnishing one's reputation?

When I observe a dealer or collector trying to deal dishonestly, I actually look at them as not only of low ethics, but also of low creativity and intelligence, in many cases, because there are so many methods and options available when one is trying to solve a challenge, such as buying and selling or trading comics. It is much more fun and rewarding when one can come to an equitable, fair and ethical conclusion.

Of course some put more effort, and have more savvy in their dealings then others, and they are the ones who usually have the larger financial reward, as should be. Most understand and accept this. **Competition** is a great motivator, we just want to feel as if we are all playing on a level field, same rules. I think most recognize one's right to shop where they please, it seems problems arise when miscommunications or outright lies saturate the relationship.

If I don't like something, I just calmly state why, and take it from there. Why get personal? If a customer does not like my service, and I surely have erred at times, I try to satisfy him or her. If I can't I've lost a customer, punishment enough. The fervor and passion of some collectors, and the greed of some dealers, make for a combustible business relationship. The hobby in this respect is really no different than most other businesses across the country and the world, human nature being remarkably consistent through time and space.

I spoke to one dealer recently who discovered a longtime customer was **stealing** from him, and more than the monetary loss, he was shocked and emotionally wounded by this deception. I remember feeling the same way years ago, when it came to my attention that a Golden Age book I purchased (unrestored) was restored. Or the time a supposed pedigree was not. I know we can all, or most of us, relate. When this type of behavior is perpetuated the offending party is causing injury not only to the person they are stealing from, but they are also causing harm to those he or she may be supporting.

I can recall an instance (in the early 1980s) where I had a sale of about $1000 worth of comics, to help someone with a medical operation, only to have the buyer point out that most of the books had restoration. I sold the batch for $500. Fortunately I was able to raise the remainder. Anytime something like this happens, it decreases one's ability to provide for their family members.

Who knows how many collectors became so frustrated or disenchanted, by the schemes and deceptions of sellers, that they just **left the hobby**. I am sure the same holds true for sellers who have had bounced checks, stock stolen, etc. Maybe some things won't or can't change, but it may be a worthwhile endeavor to see if the general professionalism of a transaction can't be significantly altered for the better.

I would love to see the AACC, or some other responsible-like organization, sponsor a bill of customer and dealer rights. Maybe seeing it in black and white will be of some significant aid.

As for some **Sales:** (And how many dealers jealously guard these figures? Sometimes for good reason.). All books are CGC unless noted. Action #319 8.5 $32, #329 9.2 $57; Batman #255 9.0 $43; Mod Squad #1 7.0 $52; Superboy #117 9.2 $105; Devil Dinosaurs #1 9.4 $27; Flash #154 9.2 $113; Lois Lane #83 9.0 $27; Space Adventures #32 9.2 $100; World's Finest #93 8.0 $118; New Gods #2 9.4 $71; Fantastic Four #19 8.5 $202; Action #246 7.5 $91; Wonder Woman #181 9.2 $56.

THE MARKET

Greg White

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Welcome to spring in Central Florida. Sales have been steady if not spectacular. **Silver Age** Marvel and DC still lead the way. The lower grade books sell well while the more expensive high-grade copies have a problem finding a home due to higher cost—most collectors simply cannot afford books in the $500 and up range.

As usual we have had to **discount** certain titles and groups of comics. As I have stated in the past the overall price structure still needs to lower in order to improve across the board sales. It is sad to see the ridiculous auction results on **slabbed comic books**. If the silly prices can be believed (I doubt many of the reports to be factual—I just can't believe there is that many stupid people within the comic industry) then this hobby is headed out the door. These bozos don't read the comics nor can they enjoy the story artwork. How can that bode well for the future of the 'hobby'? It does not. Wake up, dummies—you are buying into a line of hype that is only going to cost you big time. Don't believe me? Fine—go out right now and put that comic you just paid five times Guide for up for sale—you won't get close to what you paid for it. Grow up!

Silver Age 1955-1969: Marvels in the Good to Fine range moved well this month. Amazing Spider-Man, Avengers, Journey into Mystery and Hulk sold well. We were also able to purchase a **1960s Marvel collection** that included every super-hero book from late 1962 to 1969. A mid-grade group that will help to fill out our Marvel selection. DC books sell in spurts. One week Batman will move, the next week it will be another title. Overall DC sales are decent but a bit behind Marvel this month. Charlton, Gold Key, Harvey and other similar brands are slow as usual.

Sales: Avengers #4 VG $300; Amazing Spider-Man #9 VG $125, #17 NM $400; Fantastic Four #12 GD $125; Batman #9 GD $350; Hulk #2 VG $250; Detective #230 VG $80.

Golden Age 1935-1955: Kind of quiet this month. We picked up a run of World's Finest but that was about it. Most collectors cannot afford the better Golden Age comics. Demand was light this month. I am seeing more and more restored books from this period. We really need to address this issue with a price listing and general information in the next Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide. Not all books would be listed—let's start with key popular issues and go from there. The time has come.

Sales: Batman #52 VG $100, #100 VG $275; Detective #66 VG $400; Superman #11 FN $500; Archie #11 GD $35; Four Color #108 VF $475.

Art, Toys and Disneyana: We bought a Disney collection this month. Lots of early Disneyland and Walt Disney World items. These items have always had a good sales record for us—we should do well with this group. Demand continues for 1960s TV and comic character toys. We do not see as much of this material as we could use. We did get in the 1966 Batman Aurora model kit. I also get requests for original art but have had little offered to me in recent months. We are ripe for a quality vintage collection.

Sales: Bride of Frankenstein Aurora kit in box $400; Disneyland 1961 Guidebook $35; Flintstones cel $30; Skipper 1964 doll in box $200.

Opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Prices vary by location, date of transaction and other factors.

JOHNNY CRAIG

[continued from page 29]

preliminary sketches just to come up with a final idea that he would be satisfied with. Eventually he was asked to do drawings and paintings of all three horror host GhouLunatics.

In 1980 Johnny once again picked up pencil, brush and ink and turned out a seven-page science fiction story for DC's *Mystery in Space* #114, dated December 1980. The artist must have been thrilled when he received the script in the mail from editor Len Wein and saw that it was written by his old EC colleague, Carl Wessler. Wessler had provided stories to EC for the*Vault of Horror* comic when John was editor of that book during the 1950s.

The following year John turned in another eight-page science fiction story called "Cold Hands, Warm Hearts." This story, published in *Mystery in Space* #116 (February 1981) is a testament to Johnny's talents as a storyteller and an artist with an eye for detail. A lot of work went into this story, which deals with robots of the future. He drew one final story for DC's *House of Mystery* #300 (January 1982). This short four-page story, titled "Crash Dive," would be the artist's last comic book story. Shortly after this, John retired permanently from comic work. He also began turning down any further Vault-Keeper pen and ink commissions and would only accept them now as paintings in oil. The strain was becoming too much for his eyes to deal with the type of fine line pen or brushwork he had done years before.

Johnny continued to receive numerous commission offers from his fans to do GhouLunatic or EC cover re-creations. In 1999 he began contacting many of the fans and collectors he had done paintings for over the years, and offered them a chance to buy the preliminary sketches that he had created in preparation for their paintings. These preliminaries offer a great insight into the ways this multi-talented artist approached his work.

In his 1969 *Squa Tront* interview, Johnny ended with this: "As far as my future is concerned, I don't expect to stay in comics forever, though I enjoy the work and am truly grateful to the entire industry for all it has given and taught me."

On behalf of comic collectors and EC aficionados everywhere, this author would like to say that we appreciate the legacy Johnny Craig has left behind in the comics. It is a rich legacy, and one that we can continue to appreciate and pass on for generations yet to come. Thank goodness we have the EC Library reprint books sitting on our shelves at home to look at and re-read. What would we do without them? And lastly, what would we have done without Johnny Craig? It would be hard to imagine. Farewell, Johnny.

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